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Lumley-House:

A
N O V E L.

THE
FIRST ATTEMPT
OF A
YOUNG LADY.

“Ce qui plait est nécessairement utile; mais
“ outre cette utilité de plaisir, ou veut quelque
“ solidité de l’instruction des mœurs du vrai.”

Entretien des Cheminees de Madrid, par Le Sage.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOLUME FIRST.

L O N D O N:

Printed for W. LANE, Leadenhall-Street.



THE
AUTHOR'S ADDRESS
TO THE
PUBLIC.

THE following few simple Anecdotes, little connected, and less polished, are written from and addressed to the heart.

The Writer has no better excuse to offer for their publication,
a 3

vi. AUTHOR'S ADDRESS.

lication, than that, as they were the amusement of a few leisure moments, so she hopes they will afford some slight entertainment to the solitude, or *ennui*, of others. She trusts them to the candour of an ingenuous public, intreating, at the same time, that they will be *mercifully forgiving*, rather than *severely just*.

Unknown to the Literary World, should these Pages meet indulgence, she may hereafter



AUTHOR'S ADDRESS.

hereafter be less so; and, in return for tenderneſs ſhewn to her extreme youth, ſhe may in future afford to a Generous Public a more finiſhed production.

LUMLEY;

AUTHOR'S ADDRESS.

heretofore be let to; and, in
return for the same, the may
to be let to the may
in future and Generous
Public a more limited
question.



LUMLEY

J. E. Morris, Author,

LUMLEY-HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

AMAZEMENT.

ON an evening, the latter end of December, the Rev. Mr. Overbury, and his wife, seated by a cheerful fire, in a village of Kent, of which he was rector, returned thanks to Heaven, and congratulated each other that they were not exposed to a heavy snow which fell at that time, ac-

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B

compained

accompanied by a violent wind. Their daughter Henrietta, who was about twelve years old, had retired an hour before; and they were delightedly remarking her many amiable qualities, when a loud rapping at the door caused them both to start from their chairs: the footman (who probably was sleeping in the kitchen) not going immediately to answer it, the humanity of Mr. Overbury's heart induced him to snatch up the candle, and hasten himself to relieve the solicitor for admittance, from his uncomfortable situation. But what was his astonishment on opening the door, when he perceived a man on horseback, who, jumping hastily off, delivered into his arms a heavy burthen, wrapt in a livery great coat, with these words: " Travellers, in great distress, " are obliged to beg you will give *this* " house-room for a few days." In saying



ing this, he remounted his horse, and, notwithstanding the snow, galloped off at full speed, leaving the astonished Mr. Overbury standing with the door in his hand, till the extreme cold awakened his recollection, and he re-entered the room he had left. The look of surprise with which he approached Mrs. Overbury, and the strange appearance of his burthen, filled her with the same astonishment he felt himself. He recounted his wonderful adventure: and they proceeded to examine the contents of the bundle, which had been intrusted to him in so extraordinary a manner, when, to add to the perplexity in which they were involved, they discovered it to be a child of about a year old, very elegantly drest, and displaying at once beauty the most attractive, and innocence the most winning in its lovely face. Its eyes were closed by a pro-

found sleep : but that which principally drew their attention, was a label on its bosom, written with a pencil, inscribed *Ophelia* ; by which they judged that was its name. Round her neck was tied a rich locket of hair, of an oval form, large, and set round with brilliants, of which also was composed a cypher on the hair, *E. L.* On removing the child from the coat, a purse fell to the ground, which, they afterwards found, contained a bank-bill of thirty pounds, and upwards of twenty guineas : the purse was composed of brown and gold, having at one end an Earl's coronet. The livery-coat was white, turned up with black velvet : and these were all the clues by which it was possible for Mr. and Mrs. Overbury to discover the parents of the infant ; but, from these, they judged them to be of high rank.

By

By the time in which they had remarked all these particulars, the beautiful little female opened her dark blue eyes, and exclaimed in the most pathetic tone of voice, "Mamma!" This simple word, and the look which accompanied it, so affected the gentle Mrs. Overbury, that, while the tears rolled down her cheeks, she pressed the infant to her maternal bosom, and again hushed it to repose.

The characters of the amiable Mr. and Mrs. Overbury were such as, by their singularity, merit a description. Mr. Overbury was at the time of this remarkable event, just turned of two-and-forty. He lost his father while young; but having received a liberal education, he declared himself for the church; and was placed at college by an uncle, before he was nineteen. How-

ever, being introduced to Miss Melbourne, then a remarkably pretty girl of his own age, and charmed with the distinguished sweetness of her disposition, with all the romantic generosity of inconsiderate youth, he offered her his hand; and, by her acceptance of it offending his friends, as her fortune was very small, the first year of their union was passed in that precarious state which, by exercising the ingenuity and industry of young people, insures them from falling into the indolence affluence too often produces, and fixes them in those habits of oeconomy which nothing else can determine. At the end of that period, the death of some relations, who had gradually become reconciled to them, and the interest of some others, gave him the possession of a good estate and a valuable living; on which he now resided, performing those offices of kindness

kindness and benevolence to all his parishioners, which both the goodness of his own heart and the principles of the religion he professed, induced him to do. The poor were constantly relieved from his own table : he visited the sick, spoke comfort to the sinner, and charged himself with such attention to the education of the children, as should prevent them from adding to the number of those who, through ignorance, fall into guilt. His sermons were plain and easy ; rather practical discourses than theoretical essays. He considered, that those who chiefly wanted instruction, were such as, either from the narrowness of their capacity or their want of education, were unable to comprehend those elegant harangues, extremely well calculated to amuse a polite audience : and as the principal number of his hearers were poor and unlearned, he imi-

tated the example of his Divine Master, and addressed them in terms they could understand, though he was neither vulgar nor familiar in his phrases and manner.

Mrs. Overbury was a woman, perhaps, more suited to be his wife than any other he could have met with : her temper as sweet as he could desire, her principles determinately excellent, and her understanding solid. He had nothing left to wish, although she possessed not that discriminating genius which discerns in a moment which side it shall take, and instantly conceives every argument in its favour ; yet was he perfectly well pleased to observe in her qualities which, in his opinion, fully compensated for the want of this : nay, probably he did not perfectly understand its extent, and therefore did not miss it.

She

She was generally allowed to be one of the most amiable women in the world. He sought not for her, nor did she for herself, the title of the most brilliant, without arrogating any merit. She took such a part in Mr. Overbury's care for the poor, as the wife of every clergyman ought to do, and was particularly attentive that their children were decently cloathed and properly fed. In a word, they were, each of them in their particular province, both in precept and practice; that best and most praiseworthy of all possible characters, a True Christian.

One daughter alone survived, of several children they had been blest with:—her character will be sufficiently displayed in the course of the following pages.

TO

LUMLEY-HOUSE.

CHAPTER II.

INNOCENCE.

THE next morning Mrs. Overbury rose early, and instantly sought the apartment in which her daughter was preparing to rise; and then assured that to her prudence, though at so early an age, any thing might be intrusted, she scrupled not fully to inform her of the event of the preceding evening; at which the gentle Henrietta wept and wondered, expressing the most ardent desire to see the child, and begging Mrs. Overbury would allow her to consider it particularly her own care while it should continue with them. The instant she had finished dressing herself, the amiable girl hastened to the chamber

ber where the little Ophelia had passed the night. The sweet child opened her eyes as they entered the room, and stretched out her dimpled hands; but perceiving no face to which she was accustomed, she burst into tears, and repeatedly cried, "Mamma, Mamma!" while Henrietta, kneeling, wept over, and tried to compose and soothe her. In a short time she succeeded; and the beautiful infant smiled on her kind protectors, appearing already to return their kindness with her love. Mr. Overbury received her in the breakfast-parlour with an affection truly paternal, and encouraged his Henrietta to make every effort to please her.

The day was spent, on the part of Henrietta, in trying every device to engage the affection of Ophelia. On the part of the child sometimes in smiles,

and sometimes in tears; though they had the pleasure of observing that, ere night, sunshine predominated in her sweet face; and she seemed tolerably well contented in her new situation. Whilst Mr. and Mrs. Overbury passed the hours in anxious conjectures concerning the parents of the child, of whom they heard nothing, and night arriving, Henrietta shared her bed with Ophelia, who, tired with play, soon was asleep.

After they were retired, the affectionate pair consulted together on the future plan to be followed in relation to the child, and resolved; since Heaven had thus fixed on them to be her guardians, they would act up to that character; and if she was not claimed, to give her the same education, as far as their situation would admit, which from the apparent
rank

rank of her parents she would from them have received : to speak of her as the orphan of a deceased friend, which it would be easy to do, as none but themselves, and those who had intrusted her to their care, were acquainted with the manner in which she was left. After this decision, conscious of the benevolent intentions of their own hearts, they retired to rest.

This resolution was pursued ; and no person claiming Ophelia, she continued with them, improving every day, till she was three years old ; and was at that age, by the excellent stile in which her tutoress conveyed her lessons, enabled to know every letter in any book. — Nothing material occurred till she was six years old ; at which point of time the best masters of music, dancing, and drawing which the country afforded, were

were procured for her ; Mr. Overbury himself instructing her in French, Italian, reading, and the use of the pen : and every hour, from that æra till she was fourteen, was fully engaged in these pursuits, and the study of English literature, which was her principal pleasure. It may probably be asked, Whether, with all these avocations to divide her attention, she attained any perfection in either ? She did in all ; for the method in which she took them up, after each other, in regular progression, enabled her to pay her whole attention to the business of the time being. She never knew an idle moment ; and contracted a habit of activity so much, that sitting one quarter of an hour without employment, wearied her beyond her patience. She rose early ; and till she went to bed was never at rest. She took as much exercise as she possibly could, and enjoyed

joyed an excellent state of health. Her judgment mature beyond her years, her disposition extremely sweet, tho' when incited spirited and haughty,—her person pronounced by all extremely beautiful, it was not astonishing that Mr. and Mrs. Overbury doated on her: they admired her application, her memory, and the progress she made in all her accomplishments; but they perceived not in her, neither did they value her for that which to many would have proved the most distinguishing charm she possessed,—I mean that intuitive genius which is the brightest emanation of the soul, which fascinates every heart, which approaches the nearest of all the endowments of man to divinity; which alone can produce all that is excellent and heroic; which never stops at mediocrity, nor rests till it has gained the summit of knowledge.

Hail,

Hail, O Genius ! An enthusiast in thy cause, how little pretensions soever she has to be accounted one of thy favourites, dares boldly to assert thy supreme excellence; thou who only couldst have produced our almost-worshipped Shakespeare ! and in these our own times, the exquisite Garrick, the enchanting Abington, the expressive Siddons, and, ' though last not least ' of thy beloved sons, weep we over the scarcely interred remains of thy applauded Henderson ; who, snatching from thee a true ray of Promethean fire, spread the sacred blaze to enraptured audiences, and taught them all to own thy powerful sway ! And dare I venture to remind thee, Oh Genius, of a name from which, at the idea of competition, I must shrink away ? who owes to thee the power of painting distress in such colours, as must rend the hardest heart ! who, by thy aid,
has

has taught the mimic scenes to glow
with Nature's tints; who, with equal
excellence, has represented the polish of
taste and elegance, the artlessness of un-
informed youth, and the vile illiberality
of narrow-soul'd avarice! To attributes
like these who can avow the claim, but
that true daughter of thee my present
theme (would also I could say my in-
spired) who reflects the highest honour
on the well-known, much-applauded
name of BURNEY.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

A SEPARATION.

WITH these brilliant qualifications it was no wonder if the lovely Ophelia Melbourne (as our heroine was called) was at sixteen the admiration of the little village, more especially as Miss Overbury had never shewn any thing like that resplendency of beauty which blazed round Ophelia ; whose person, though truly feminine, united the idea of majesty with grace ; and whose manners, though they breathed the most elegant softness, were yet accompanied by such an inborn dignity as art can never teach. I have said that her person was completely feminine, and her mind was so much so, that she studiously

ously avoided all exercises of a masculine nature ; and though she sat on a horse with the grace of Diana, yet she never spoke of it as an accomplishment, but a convenience ; and seldom wore a habit but when travelling. She made no merit of mounting a spirited beast and jumping gates, but wholly confined herself to a woman's pace, and a woman's delicacy ; and this not from want of skill, but from want of inclination. Without affectation, she had all that soft timidity which is so irresistibly engaging : her sensibility was too exquisite to content itself with forming a collection of birds, dogs, cats, &c. though she liked them in place ; but a tale of woe would not only melt her into tears she could not conceal, but would also incite her never to rest till she had, if possible, sought out and relieved the object of it ; yet was she seldom the dupe of deceit, since

since she would herself see that circumstances were as they had been represented to her: and a tale of oppression would make her cheeks glow and her eyes sparkle with resentment she could not suppress. Doubtless, a heart so tender, so alive as Ophelia's, must sometimes err. I am inclined to think those who have no faults have no virtues; for that very intelligence of soul which produces the most brilliant effect, sometimes leads the heart into errors, which perhaps only proceed from the excess of its virtues.—Amiable are these venial trespasses; and, like spots in the sun, they serve to set off the more lucid parts of the character.

At the period already mentioned, a change of situation took place at the parsonage, which deprived the sweet Ophelia of her first governess, the gentle

tle Henrietta ; who then consented to reward the constancy of a gentleman who had paid his addresses to her some years. The name of this gentleman was Alwin : his living (he was a clergyman) was situated at a small village in Devonshire, whither, upon his marriage, he intended to carry his amiable bride ; so that the pain of parting with her parents was rendered more acute by distance, the little probability there was of their often meeting.

Mr. Alwin, it's true, had nothing sufficiently marked in his character to demand a particular description. He was well read, sensible, and good-tempered : and Miss Overbury wisely preferring these qualities to the sparkle of wit or the elegance of person, gave him her hand, and, by so doing, rendered him and herself happy.

The

The grief of Ophelia's heart is better imagined than described on the parting. Scarcely could the esteem she felt for Mr. Alwin induce her to forgive him, for robbing her of her beloved friend; and the promise of correspondence had little in it of consolation to the aching heart of Ophelia, which retained a deep impression of sadness many days after the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Alwin, although she assumed all the cheerfulness in her power to comfort the dejected friends, who had so long, although she knew not the extent of their kindness, supported and instructed her. In this she succeeded tolerably well, and time a little alleviated their sorrow; their daughter's happiness being a sufficient motive with them to overcome all the anxiety or uneasiness they might otherwise have felt.

Half

Half a year had not elapsed since Mrs. Alwin's departure, when they heard that a noble mansion in the neighbourhood, called Lumley-House, belonging to the Earl of Clifford, which had been tenanted only by servants upwards of twenty years, having been vacated by the going away and death of its owner, was, for the future, to become the residence of the Clifford family, and that proper repairs were making in it for their reception. On Ophelia's enquiring why it had been so long uninhabited? Mr. Overbury answered, He had never heard any reason assigned: adding, that he had known the old Lord Lumley, who resided in it many years, extremely well; and also his son, who lived there a short time, but quitted it before his father's death, and never returned to it: that he had never received any intelligence of him since, except

except a rumour first of his marriage, then of his death; and he believed, with some particular circumstances, in each, which he had never been fully informed of. — This account satisfied the slight curiosity which had been raised in Ophelia; and she began to wish earnestly for their arrival, hoping they might prove pleasing acquaintances.

On the ensuing Sunday, when Mrs. Overbury and Ophelia had entered the church, they perceived in the adjoining pew ~~strangers~~ whom they directly concluded to be the noble inhabitants of Lumley-House. The party consisted of a gentleman about forty, a lady (who immediately attracted the eyes of Ophelia, by the elegance of her person) seemingly something younger, and a young lady, apparently the age of our heroine. Ophelia, whose attention but few

few things could divert from the duty of the day, could not sometimes resist the impulse she felt to gaze on the elder of the ladies, whom she supposed to be the Countess; and though she felt herself strongly impressed with respect, by the dignity of her air, yet was she also forcibly attracted by the sweetness of her countenance; and frequently found the eyes of the stranger fixed on her own, with an expression of anxious enquiry, extremely interesting, while the gaze of the younger seemed dictated by half-restrained curiosity. At length, ashamed that her thoughts should so long wander from the sacred service of the place, she restored to her devotion all its usual fervency.

When the excellent though plain discourse of Mr. Overbury was ended, and he joined his amiable wife at the pew-

door, they paid their compliments to the noble strangers, who returned them with every appearance of affability and pleasure.

On their way home, Ophelia expressing herself charmed with Lady Clifford, Mr. and Mrs. Overbury promised her she should accompany them next day, in a visit they meant to pay to the inhabitants of Lumley-House.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IV.

GRANDEUR.

THE heart of Ophelia had seldom been so much agitated as on this occasion, nor had she ever taken half so much pains to look well: her head-dress was changed more than once; and, on Mrs. Overbury's asking the reason of this unusual attention, she exclaimed, "Oh, Ma'am! if you did but know how much I wish Lady Clifford to like me, you would not wonder at my anxiety!" The warmth with which she spoke, astonished the placid Mrs. Overbury, who, even in her youth, had never felt that sort of prepossession she remarked in Ophelia, which gave so striking an animation to her features.

She admonished the sweet girl on the danger of trusting to appearances ; — a doctrine which the ingenuous heart of Ophelia could not easily receive, or very much admire ; and on which she reflected some time, without being able to convince herself of its justice. A belief in physiognomy is, perhaps, the error of generous minds. I do not mean the imagination that you can discover the particular passions of the mind by the cast of the features, but that you may easily perceive whether any one is amiable, or the contrary : and, whether it was owing to our heroine's peculiar penetration, or to her good-fortune, certain it is she was seldom mistaken. She finished her dress at length : they set off for the desirable visit ; and the chaise soon stopped at the door of Lumley-House. Pleasure and surprize now took possession of the bosom

bosom of our fair heroine : she had never seen any thing half so magnificent as that noble mansion. The number of domestics in rich liveries, the brilliancy of the furniture, the heighth and stateliness of the apartments, though they did not intimidate Ophelia, or give her an outward air, filled her mind with wonder ; but even that was dissipated when the door of an elegant drawing-room was thrown open, and she was introduced to the Earl and Countess of Clifford and Lady Eugenia Osmond, their only daughter.

The same expression filled the eyes of Lady Clifford, when Miss Melbourne was introduced to her, which had appeared in them the day before.—

“ I should not,” said Mrs. Overbury to Lady Clifford, after they were seated, “ have taken the liberty of introducing

“ my niece the first time I had the honour of paying my respects to your Ladyship, had she not so earnestly wished to accompany us, that I could not deny her.” ‘ Indeed,’ said Lady Clifford, ‘ since Miss Melbourne was so kind as to wish to come hither, it would have been quite cruel to refuse both her and myself so great a pleasure. But my dear young lady,’ said she, turning to the blushing Ophelia, whom she had seated on the same sofa with herself, ‘ I am afraid we shall not be able to induce you to come hither again.’

Ophelia could not speak; but she could look: which she did so expressively, that Lady Clifford perfectly understood her, and prest her hand, while Ophelia longed, with an unaccountable earnestness, to kneel and kiss hers.

When-

Whenever the duties of politeness would permit, the Countess addressed herself to the charmed Ophelia in words of the tenderest import. Several times she fixed her eyes on her, with sighs, which the feeling and ingenuous Ophelia returned, but without knowing their source. She felt her heart unusually softened, and a sweet enthusiasm take possession of her bosom. In that moment of attachment, she felt she could have parted with her life to save Lady Clifford's; and her young heart, in that hour, gave itself up to a tenderness which presaged what it would feel in future.

Just before they took leave, Lady Clifford begged they might be very intimate; and, by joining Ophelia's hand with Lady Eugenia's, she intreated her to visit them often; and added, "I

“ hope you two young ladies will form
“ a friendship, which it will give me
“ the highest satisfaction to cultivate.”

Ophelia courtesied as she parted with Lady Eugenia's hand, and said,
“ I hope your Ladyship will permit
“ me to profit by the honour Lady
“ Clifford does me.” Lady Eugenia returned only a low courtesy, and seemed to hesitate for words; but was silent. They then parted, and returned to the parsonage.

On their way thither, Mr. Overbury asked Ophelia for her opinion of the Cliffords: and she expressed herself more than ever interested and charmed with the Countess. Of Lord Clifford, she said that she could not judge, except that he appeared good-humoured and well-bred; but, she added, that
Lady

Lady Eugenia did not appear to her as if she possessed either that elegance of manners, or intelligence of mind, that might have been expected from a daughter of Lady Clifford, who united both in a superior degree. He then asked her how she liked the house? To which she answered, That it was splendid enough to astonish her. "And yet," said he, "you did not appear embarrassed." To which she replied, That a fine house had in it nothing to awe, though it might have a great deal to please: and added, That she found herself much more confused with the continual and unrestrained gaze of that gentleman called Colonel Griffiths; and that she wondered how any person, used to genteel company, could behave in a manner so extremely rude.

Mrs. Overbury then, with more asperity than Ophelia had ever seen her assume, reprehended her for so freely giving her opinion of persons infinitely superior, both in age and rank, to herself; and told Mr Overbury, that she wondered how he could suffer so young a girl to have any opinion of her own! Ophelia replied, that she should never have thought of giving hers, had not Mr. Overbury requested it: That she did not imagine it necessary to use any reserve to him, since she wished he would correct her ideas, if false; which he could not do, if unacquainted with them. — “Ophelia,” said Mrs. Overbury, “you know I hate argument; therefore do not talk any more about it:” — and, in consequence of this desire, they remained silent all the rest of the way.

The

The beauty of Ophelia's person has often been mentioned in general terms; and probably a particular description of it may not be displeasing.

Miss Melbourne was tall of her age, elegantly shaped, and proportioned by the hand of Harmony itself. The charms of Venus, as the poets describe them, could not outvie those of our beautiful heroine; and the Graces, the handmaids of the goddess, had literally decorated the lovely girl with those *agremens* peculiar to themselves, — and without which the most perfect beauty ceases to please. Her hair, of a light auburn, was extremely long and thick, curling in bright waves, over a bosom which was of a clear and almost transparent white: her forehead was low, and of a polished fairness: her eyebrows, rather darker than her hair,

were regularly arched, and yet had not that pencilled look which gives the appearance of art. It is not in the power of description to give any idea of the beauty of her eyes: they were dark-blue, long made, with long and thick dark eye-lashes, which gave to them a tremulous lustre, like that which plays about the diamond. Her nose was neither large nor small, rather inclining to the Grecian form, which marked the rest of her features with an air of dignity. Her mouth was small, with the under-lip rather fuller than the other, which was uncommonly thin: her teeth small, even, and of that translucent whiteness which has a sort of blueness about it: her chin small, round, and slightly dimpled; while

The softest blush which Nature spreads,
Gave colour to her cheek!

where

where a dimple, when she smiled, gave an additional softness to her features.

It is possible to describe the particular stile of her features; but who shall delineate that ever-varying expression, animation and intelligence which framed in every glance, and gave to her face its most prevailing charm! Alas! here all writing fail; and those only who have felt the power of this expression, will be able to conceive its forcible attraction.

Such was the form of the fair Ophelia! and lovely as it was, it was still inferior to the solidity and brilliance of her mind!

CHAP.

CHAPTER V.

A DISCOVERY.

THE next morning Ophelia, finding herself indisposed with a slight cold, did not, as her custom was, rise early to walk; and while she lay awake, revolving in her mind the circumstances of her late agreeable visit, she heard Mrs. Overbury enter her husband's study, which was separated from Ophelia's room only by a slight partition. After they had discoursed a while upon indifferent subjects, Mr. Overbury asked where Ophelia was? "In the garden, I imagine," answered Mrs. Overbury. Upon which he answered, "I was sorry, my dear, to hear you check her so harshly, for sentiments

“ments which charmed me, by their
“discernment and accuracy. Upon
“my word, she is a most amiable girl;
“and, with her person and mind, will
“probably raise herself to that station
“by marriage, which by birth I be-
“lieve she ought to have filled. Poor
“child, I pity her feelings, when she
“learns (as some time she must do)
“that she has no natural right to our
“assistance.”—At these words the agi-
tated girl redoubled her attention.—
“The more I reflect on that extraor-
“dinary occurrence, the more I am
“amazed. —But tell me, Henrietta,
“are you not of opinion that we ought
“to acquaint her, as far as we know,
“of her origin?” “Indeed,” said Mrs.
Overbury, “I do not know what to say.
“I don’t see why she should not con-
“tinue to think herself our niece.”—
“Nay, my dear,” answered he, “but
“how

“ how shall we do should any suitable
“ match offer for her? have we any
“ right, think you, to dispose of her
“ hand?” “ Surely. I am amazed,
“ Mr. Overbury, how you can make a
“ question of it! Who else has?”—
“ Who else, Henrietta? Herself.”—
“ Why yes, my dear. I don’t mean to
“ say that she should not follow her
“ own inclination: I would by no
“ means force it.” “ I dare engage,
“ you would not; but, my dear Mrs.
“ Overbury, how can she judge for
“ herself, unless that we give her the
“ means?” “ I do not understand
“ you.” “ No!” said he. “ I mean,
“ how can she judge, unless she knows
“ the reason we have to believe her of
“ noble extraction? The situation she
“ might accept as only Ophelia Mel-
“ bourne, would by no means be suit-
“ able to an Earl’s daughter, which I
“ doubt

“doubt not but she is. I do not re-
“gret for her sake that we cannot
“discover her parents, I am per-
“suaded she is perfectly happy with
“us; but when she finds we are not
“her relations, severe indeed will be the
“pain she will feel, in learning of her
“having no others.—I cannot pity her
“natural friends: they might reclaim
“her, if they pleased; and if they,
“like the base Indian, throw a pearl
“away richer than all their tribe,
“theirs is the loss. Yet future con-
“tingencies may induce Ophelia to
“with herself in a situation superior to
“that she at present fills: and the
“knowledge that only a strange chance
“threw her out of it, will certainly
“make her grief the more poignant.
“On the whole, therefore, I am re-
“solved to keep the secret from her
“till necessity shall oblige us to dis-
“close.

"close it." They then quitted the subject, and, a very little time after, separated.

Poor Ophelia remained in the severest distress, till her not appearing at the breakfast-table caused Mrs. Overbury to seek her in her chamber; but she was too much agitated to speak; and therefore feigned to be in a slumber; which Mrs. Overbury, seeing she looked pale, would not disturb.

Immediately after her departure, Ophelia rose, and, after dressing herself, with much difficulty she walked into the breakfast-parlour, where she found Mrs. Overbury alone; who, startled at the paleness of her countenance, and the redness of her eyes, intreated to know what was the matter; and that she would take some refreshment;

ment ; but Ophelia then bursting into tears she could no longer restrain, covered her face, and was silent. Her truly maternal friend excessively alarmed, pressed her to her bosom, begged she would moderate her strong emotions, and disclose their cause : but happening, in the course of her tender soothing, to term Ophelia her dear child, — the unhappy girl, half wild, fell on her knees, and exclaimed, “ My
“ mother indeed ! Alas ! is it true
“ that I have no claim to the title of
“ your child ? Have I no friends ?
“ and, when I learn you are not my
“ relations, must I indeed also find I
“ have no others ? ” This allusion to the words that Mr. Overbury had used, in a moment informed Mrs. Overbury of the cause of her distress. Embracing her, therefore, with tears, she replied, ‘ Be comforted, my sweet girl,
‘ my

‘ my own Ophelia: Can you doubt
‘ you have a mother while I live?’
—“ You are all goodness; but am I
“ so worthless, does no one own me?
“ Oh Madam, where is my mother?
“ Alas! why do I not die?”

During these pathetic, and almost inarticulate exclamations, the wretched Ophelia clasped her arms round her beloved friend, and leant her head on Mrs. Overbury’s knee, who, alarmed at her violent sobs, endeavoured, in vain, to raise her from the ground. Lifting up, at length, her expressive face, she continued, in plaintive accents, “ Oh,
“ my friend! my maternal protectress!
“ will you not at least tell me who I
“ am? Will you let me expire in this
“ suspense? Trust me, I will be very
“ calm when I know the extent of my
“ misery. Will you not say that my
“ parents

“parents (alas ! perhaps I have none !)
“they despise me ? — Let me, my
“dearest Madam, kneel at their feet :
“let me but see them : let me be blest
“with one glance from my father’s
“eye ; one smile from my mother,
“and then die !”

At this moment Lady Clifford and Lady Eugenia, whose carriage had stopped unnoticed, entered the room. Astonished at what she saw, the amiable Countess had no power to retreat ; but struck by the beautiful figure of Ophelia, she stood fixedly, gazing upon her. The strong expression of her face, her attitude, her tears, her disordered hair, conveyed to her mind the most forcible ideas. Neither Mrs. Overbury nor the unfortunate girl saw them enter.

Ophelia

Ophelia continued, with great emotion, “ Oh tell me, I beseech you! “ Do not, for the first time, now be “ cruel! I intreat you, my best friend, “ do not deny me this. Let me at “ least, before my heart shall break, “ let me but know——”

An exclamation from Lady Clifford now caused Ophelia to turn round; when, starting from her knees, she covered her face, and rushed out of the room, at the opposite door. Mrs. Overbury vainly endeavouring to overcome her agitation, rose to receive her unseasonable visitors. Lady Clifford advancing, took Mrs. Overbury's hand, and said, “ I cannot forgive myself, “ my dear Madam, for this intrusion; “ and still less shall I be inclined to “ pardon my own impertinence, unless I can, in some measure, alleviate

“ viate

“viate the excessive concern I perceive in you, and the violent agitation of your charming niece. Do not refuse me, dear Mrs. Overbury, the pleasure I shall feel in assisting you. Command my best services, and believe that any thing I possess is at your devotion.” “I sincerely thank your Ladyship,” replied Mrs. Overbury; “but alas, the cause of Ophelia’s distress, which occasions my own, nothing, I fear, can remove. She supplicates me to inform her of what I know not myself; and, from her violent emotions, I have not yet been able to explain myself to her. Alas! I fear the unfortunate event of this day will tincture her future life with melancholy! She happened to overhear a conversation I held with Mr. Overbury this morning, and has since been in the greatest

‘est

‘ est distress. She has too much sensibility to be happy. Except from this unfortunate accident, she might never have heard what now gives her so much uneasiness and pain. I heartily sympathize with her.’

Lady Clifford expressed herself extremely concerned; and again reiterating her offers of service, took her leave; politely saying she would no longer detain Mrs. Overbury from a much more important engagement; and which, it was easily perceived, occasioned so great an agitation of mind.

Before Lady Clifford left the room, Mrs. Overbury judged it, in some degree, necessary to solicit her Ladyship not to take any notice of the affair for the present; she therefore, in a very polite manner, begged that she
would

LUMLEY-HOUSE.

would be obliging enough not to make mention of what had passed, relative to Ophelia. To which Lady Clifford most kindly acquiesced; and they then immediately parted.

CHAPTER V.

AN EXPLANATION.

MRS. Overbury immediately sought her unfortunate *Eleve*, and found her weeping, and in great distress. It was altogether vain, for some considerable time, that Mrs. Overbury endeavoured to moderate her excessive grief of mind. At length, by prevailing on her to lie down and swallow some drops, she succeeded; and sleep overcoming the much-exhausted girl, she awoke something refreshed.

Mrs. Overbury, the ever-attentive and dear friend of Ophelia, now seized the present as the most proper opportunity for relating all that she knew concerning

cerning her. During the recital, Miss Melbourne's attention was the only preservative from her fainting. A ray of hope, however, broke through the heavy gloom of her mind.

Ophelia fondly imagined that the trinkets which accompanied her, might ultimately be the means of producing a discovery; and asked most eagerly to see them. They were shewn her. She shed torrents of tears over the locket, and, tying it round her neck, declared she would never more part with it.

It gave Miss Melbourne a deal of pleasure that Mrs. Overbury had not mentioned the particular cause of her agitation to Lady Clifford; mournfully adding; — “Ah, my dear Madam, “ what do I not owe to your goodness, “ your delicacy! To you I am in-

“debted for every blessing. Do not
“think me ungrateful, that I weep the
“neglect of my natural friends. Oh,
“May I not be allowed to wish I had
“really a mother! Oh Heaven! shall
“I never see her! Shall I never ex-
“perience maternal fondness! Shall
“I never be pressed to the bosom
“which gave me life?” In saying
this, she redoubled her tears, and re-
fused comfort.

During this burst of silent woe, Mr.
Overbury came in, and was beginning
to question her; but his amiable wife
made a sign to him, and, taking him
across the room, gave him to under-
stand the painful discovery that had ta-
ken place since he went out in the morn-
ing. He advanced towards the weeping
Ophelia, who, falling on her knees,
exclaimed, “Oh Sir, how can I ever
“express

“ express the gratitude with which my
“ bosom is so abundantly filled ! Oh,
“ my only father, your goodness to a
“ distressed and deserted orphan——”

Here her voice faltered, and she remained silent. The good Mr. Overbury, being deeply affected, raising her tenderly, pressed her to his bosom ; and by his well-timed and well-adapted soothing, greatly consoled and relieved her.

It was in this trying, this painful situation, that the truly amiable Ophelia found the dictates of religion of the utmost service. Instructed by them, she was better enabled to bear her unfortunate fate, and taught to look forward with hope to the great hereafter, which only can form a christian's firmest comfort.

Acutely as Ophelia felt her misfortunes, she yet assumed fortitude sufficient to bear them; and though her frame was weakened by the conflict, yet her soul resigned itself to the will of its Creator. She recollected, with gratitude, the many blessings she had received at his hands; and considered, that, had she been brought up in the situation to which she believed she had a natural right, temptations would perhaps have surrounded her; and such too, in all probability, as she could not have been able to withstand. Enervated by education, she might have yielded to the solicitations of pride or folly, and have become one of those poor thoughtless beings she had now learnt to despise. She reflected, that in the midst of affluence, she might not have been able to "hold fast her integrity;" neither could she have hoped,
on

on the elevation of grandeur, to have seen sixteen years of life pass unruffled as those she had spent in the peaceful vale of mediocrity: that although the indulgence of her relations might have exceeded that of her benefactors, their kindness never could; and therefore, although the one might have raised her passions to a dangerous height, the other never could have given her principles more determined than those which she had received from the precepts and examples of her amiable friends: and then, being perfectly acquainted how infinitely more valuable are religion and virtue than splendor and riches, she concluded that she had very happily made an exchange of the one for the other. Still, however, a deep sigh, of the tenderest regret, accompanied every idea that led to the ardor of maternal fondness,

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fondness, or the beauty and satisfaction of filial attention.

And now she began to hope that her parents were still alive, the first wish of her soul was to see and know them; the second, That they should own and love her: and therefore, though the above-mentioned reflections rescued her from violent grief, the tenderness of her nature spread over her whole manner a soft and gentle melancholy, which even her protectors sought not to rob her of, except by silent affection and tender assiduity.

It was some days ere the greatly afflicted girl could by any means prevail on herself to quit the house; during which time Lady Clifford sent constantly to enquire after the health of her friends, and particularly that of Miss

Miss Melbourne. On the sixth day after that on which she surprized Mrs. Overbury and Ophelia, she called with Lady Eugenia. On their entrance our fair heroine rose, deeply blushing, and joined in Mrs. Overbury's thanks for their enquiries, by a most expressive look and silent courtesy. Lady Clifford took Ophelia by the hand, and pressed it, affectionately enquiring how she did; but the amiable girl's emotion, added to the vermilion that suddenly appeared on her cheek, entirely prevented the articulation of a single word.

Lady Clifford continuing to address Mrs. Overbury, without noticing the interesting confusion in which Ophelia appeared, said, "I came, my dear
" Madam, to intreat your permission
" for my sweet young friend's spend-

“ing the day with me: the ride will
“do her good; and you may depend
“on my taking every care of her. I
“shall not,” added she, smiling, “ask
“her consent; I am sure she will do
“as you like.” Mrs. Overbury re-
plied, with a smile, ‘Your Ladyship is
‘very kind; but I must refer you to
‘Ophelia.’ She would willingly, not-
withstanding her predilection in favour
of the inviter, have declined the invita-
tion of Lady Clifford; but reading in
Mrs. Overbury’s eyes a wish that she
should accept, she instantly determined
to obey her desires, although in contra-
diction to her own inclination, and
agreed to go. Retiring therefore, with
a melancholy air, she went to change
her dress: this was soon done: and she
then took particular care not to forget
her newly-acquired locket; concealing
it, however, in her bosom, in order to
avoid

avoid such interrogations as perhaps she could not easily have answered.

Ophelia, in endeavouring to conceal the locket, hitched it in some part of her dress; and, catching it hastily out, she touched, by some means, a secret spring, which opening, discovered to her the picture of an elegant young man, whose likeness to Ophelia struck even herself. “This then is my father,” she exclaimed, throwing herself on her knees; “and thus let me pay homage to the dear, dear resemblance.” Then pressing it repeatedly to her lips, she wept, with the most affecting passion. Ten thousand tender ideas crowded into her mind, almost too rapidly to be supported. Mrs. Overbury coming up, in order to hasten her, found her leaning her crossed arms on a table, where she had

laid the portrait, while the tears hung on her cheeks, like a soft rain on the inner tint of a white rose. Mrs. Overbury, who stood quite amazed at finding her in this situation, advancing, soon received the information she requested; for Ophelia, holding out the miniature, exclaimed with the greatest degree of rapture, "My father! my father!" — Mrs. Overbury immediately perceived the strong resemblance the first glance she had of it; and concluded as Ophelia did. She had some difficulty in consoling the sensible girl on this new revival of her sorrows; but completing at length her purpose, she led her down to the parlour.

Lady Clifford's pleasure in preparing to take Miss Melbourne to Lumley-House, was considerably damped, by perceiving the traces of grief more fully impressed

impressed in her lovely features than when she had quitted the room. She answered her apologies for detaining her, with the utmost tenderness: and they took leave together.

CHAPTER VI.

A GRATIFICATION.

THE morning passed with tolerable comfort to Ophelia, in an elegant and rational conversation with her new friend: and although the present state of her mind incapacitated her for lively and brilliant sallies, the remarks she sometimes proposed, conveyed to Lady Clifford the highest ideas of her intellectual powers, while the deep sigh and half-restrained tear engaged the fondest affection of her heart to the charming girl.

Lady Eugenia bore only a little share in this pleasing intercourse; and although

though Ophelia's penetration was somewhat overclouded, still she perceived in her a certain something altogether unpleasant. Her observations were without distinction; and when they were contradicted, she contented herself with saying "I don't think so;" and seemed to consider a simple assertion as good ground for opinion as the most convincing argument. There was, however, in her manner a certain modesty and reserve, that induced Ophelia to attribute to diffidence what otherwise she would have considered to be weakness; nevertheless, she thought diffidence in such a situation was scarcely defensible, and in many instances, wholly uncommendable.

This train of thought, by carrying Ophelia out of herself, was certainly of the most evident service to our fair heroine;

heroine; who, endeavouring to discard her late disagreeable ideas, studied, by every means, to render herself as pleasing a companion as possible to Lady Clifford; and in doing this she most amply succeeded.

At dinner Lord Clifford introduced a genteel young man, who was soon going to the East Indies. He was a distant relation of the family: his name Captain Saville. Although he was restrained by respect, yet his gaze was very frequently directed towards the fair Ophelia, who was occupied too much by her own feelings to attend anywise to him.

Lady Clifford, as soon as the dinner was over, requested of Miss Melbourne to favour them with a sonata on the harpsichord; but this Ophelia politely begged

begged permission to decline, unless that Lady Eugenia would be so obliging as give her an example. A blush, at the same moment, overspread the cheeks of Lady Clifford and her daughter, whilst Lord Clifford, with more austerity than Ophelia had ever before observed, replied, "You must excuse her, indeed, Miss Melbourne; she does not choose to know how to play." Ophelia was extremely concerned at this unexpected reply, and likewise that she should be the means of starting a subject so evidently disagreeable to the family; but, that it might be no more mentioned, she complied with the next request to play; and at once charmed and astonished her hearers by her exquisite taste and rapid execution. In the pathetic parts of the composition, the former quality displayed itself so advantageously, that every

every one who heard, felt it was genuine, by its sweet influence on their hearts.

When Ophelia had finished, and received the compliments of the party, to which she was so highly entitled, Lady Clifford said, "You are, I see, Miss Melbourne, a disciple of the Italian school. Pray, do you sing Italian?" "Sometimes, Madam," replied Ophelia, "though I think many of our English composers are equal in the vocal line; but they are not, in my opinion, fit to be compared to the Italian masters in the instrumental." "I am perfectly of your opinion," said Lady Clifford: "I do not admire the ancient stile of instrumental music... But will you please to convince us, by singing one, that my favourite Jackson's compositions

“ fitions are equal to any of whatever
“ nation?” “ Indeed,” replied Ophelia,
“ I must request your Ladyship’s ex-
“ cuse; I am quite unable to sing at
“ present.” “ Then,” said Lady Clif-
ford, “ I certainly will not press it.—
“ Come, Captain Saville, will you fa-
“ vour us, by being Miss Melbourne’s
“ *delegue*?”

“ With the greatest reluctance,” the
Captain replied; and then, on Ophelia
joining her solicitations, he sung and
played a delightful Italian air. Miss
Melbourne, who loved music with all
the enthusiasm incident to genius, had
never before been so much gratified.
He made choice of several sweet and
plaintive performances, both in Italian
and English; and at length he sung
that sweet air of Jackson’s, in the Lord
of the Manor, *Encompass’d in an Angel’s*
Frame.

Frame. Mr. Saville's manner and voice were exactly suited to the song; and, altogether, they were so completely in unison with the feelings of Ophelia, that she evinced her sensibility by a flood of tears she could neither restrain nor conceal. She could not return him those thanks he merited; and, on his choosing an air still more plaintive, *Queen Mary's Lamentation*, her emotions were raised to a pitch too high to be supported. On their seeing the agitation of mind in which Ophelia appeared, occasioned by the melancholy air, they ceased to urge him to sing; and the considerate Lady Clifford advised her to take a walk in the park with Lady Eugenia, in order to see a beautiful grotto, only at a little distance from the house. Being glad of the least relief to the acuteness of her sensations, Ophelia immediately complied: and
the

the two young ladies strolled out together, for the benefit of a short walk and a little variety.

The walk, which was silent and unsocial, afforded no kind of pleasure to Miss Melbourne; and was apparently irksome to her companion, who was, however, extremely civil, although her manners, as Ophelia had before justly observed on their first interview, were neither elegant nor pleasing. There were several little inaccuracies of behaviour that disgusted, and at the same time astonished Miss Melbourne, who, as yet, knew not to what cause they ought to be attributed; justly conceiving that no attention had been spared by Lady Clifford to make her daughter equally as accomplished and agreeable a companion as her Ladyship.

The

The spirits of Ophelia reviving by the exercise, she resolved, if possible, to penetrate farther into the character of Lady Eugenia. She therefore, by way of opening a conversation, remarked that the view before them was charming. “Very beautiful, Ma’am,” answered Lady Eugenia; but without any of that energy in her manner which would have given force to her words; and Ophelia looking round, saw that her head was turned another way! — “Do you draw, Lady Eugenia?” “A little, Ma’am.” “I make no doubt you excel. What do you principally study, pray?” “Landscapes and flowers.” “Do you not love to design figures?” “I hardly ever design; and, though I admire figures, yet they are too difficult for me.” “Nay,” said Miss Melbourne, smiling, “you are only too modest. Do you not

“not know that an artist should never
“be diffident?” Lady Eugenia smiled,
and said, very coolly, she had no ap-
plication: — an idea which neither ap-
peared new or mortifying to her! —
“Alas!” thought Ophelia, “and I fear
“you have not got a genius brilliant
“enough to compensate its absence.”
And continuing the conversation, she
spoke of Captain Saville’s singing with
rapture, and asked Lady Eugenia if she
loved music? “O yes, I am passion-
“ately fond of it.” “I wonder then
“you do not play!” She smiled, and
said, it was too much trouble. “Trou-
“ble,” replied Ophelia, with surprise;
“but is not the pleasure more than
“an equivalent?” “Yes, to be sure
“it is very agreeable, when people
“play well; but I am sure I should
“never succeed.” “How so?” asked
Ophelia.

Ophelia. "I have not application
" enough."

Miss Melbourne, quite tired of the attempt to develop a character which seemed by no means to reward her trouble, she continued almost the rest of the time totally silent; and Lady Eugenia made very few efforts to renew the conversation: they therefore returned towards the house; but ere they reached it, were met by Lord Clifford and Captain Saville, who were coming to seek them, and attended them into the room where Lady Clifford was sitting. "So, young ladies," said she, with a smile, "you have been gone a
" great while. Did you not perceive the
" damps of the evening coming on?
" You know, Miss Melbourne, I pro-
" mised Mrs. Overbury to take great
" care of you; yet I cannot be angry,
" since

“ since it was my hope that each of
“ you young ladies should be able to
“ find a sufficient degree of pleasure
“ with her companion, to induce both
“ to prolong the walk : and I presume
“ it has exactly happened as I was
“ wishing.”

‘ We did not walk far,’ said Lady
Eugenia ; ‘ but I thought we were
‘ gone a long time, indeed. Did not
‘ you think so too, Miss Melbourne ?’
“ Indeed no, Lady Eugenia, I really
“ did not entertain such a thought,”
replied Ophelia, with a most involun-
tary politeness ; “ I acknowledge I
“ was too well entertained, to think
“ the time wearisome ; and I had not
“ the least suspicion but that you was
“ of the same opinion. I am sorry to
“ find you differ.”

‘ You are very polite, Miss Melbourne,’ said Lady Clifford; ‘ but Eugenia is too inattentive ever to be so!’—Her Ladyship spoke this with some degree of asperity; and Lady Eugenia was evidently a good deal confused. Ophelia was very much concerned that she had given occasion to this rebuke, by what she had spoken; and began to apologize. However, there was nothing farther said on the subject. The conversation changed immediately after, but did not continue long.

During tea Miss Melbourne was seated next Lady Clifford, who, leaning towards her, said, in a low tone of voice, “ I am extremely pleased, my dear girl, to observe that change of company has been of such service to your spirits. You must try the experiment

“ periment often. Have you any ob-
“ jection to coming hither again to-
“ morrow? Eugenia and her father
“ are engaged to spend the day out;
“ so that, if you can content yourself
“ with the society of an old woman,
“ yours will afford me the greatest plea-
“ sure.” ‘ Your Ladyship does me
‘ the highest honour,’ answered Miss
Melbourne; ‘ and if Mrs. Overbury
‘ will spare me, I shall be extremely
‘ happy in having the pleasure to wait
‘ on you; but at present, I fear my
‘ company is still less desirable than
‘ ever.’ “ You must not sigh, my
“ dear: only consider how many evils
“ you are a stranger to, and how
“ many blessings you have received.”
‘ Your Ladyship is perfectly in the
‘ right. I strive to be grateful: I do
‘ not repine; but I can never cease to
‘ regret,’

They were then interrupted in their conversation; and Ophelia promising to come immediately after breakfast the next day, returned to the parsonage in Lord Clifford's chaise.

CHAPTER VII.

A RESERVE.

OPHELIA, predetermined to appear more cheerful at the parsonage, encouraged only such ideas as could tend to make her so; and endeavoured, during her ride, to exclude all disagreeable thoughts, by recollecting the events of the day. In doing this, the strange manners of Lady Eugenia recurred to her memory; and she endeavoured, for some time, to ascertain her real character. She could, however, only determine that there was in it a strange mixture of modesty and weakness: qualities rarely compatible: and she resolved to suspend her opinion,

till a farther acquaintance should have justified it.

When Ophelia had arrived at home, her kind friends were much delighted on perceiving she was a great deal more cheerful than at her departure ; on which account, they readily agreed to her going again the next day. After some little conversation, they gave her a letter from Mrs. Alwin ; which she opened immediately and read : It contained as follows :

“ My beloved Ophelia,

“ I know that you will receive this
“ epistle with a great degree of pleasure ; more particularly when it con-
“ veys the information that Mr. Alwin
“ and your Henrietta are in perfect
“ good health and spirits.

“ I thank

“ I thank you for your last letter,
“ which gave me the most satisfac-
“ tory and pleasing accounts of all my
“ beloved friends. How often do I
“ wish you were with me, my sweet
“ girl! — I have before told you that
“ our house is most delightfully situ-
“ ated; but I have never before ex-
“ perienced this truth in its fullest ex-
“ tent.

“ The country, every way round us,
“ now ‘blooms a perfect Eden;’ and
“ our garden is in a charming condi-
“ tion. There is one spot in particu-
“ lar, I often wish you could see, I am
“ sure it would delight you. It is a
“ small clump of short and thick trees,
“ planted in a kind of semicircle: the
“ interstices are filled with flowering-
“ shrubs, which blow in regular suc-
“ cession; and woodbines, jeffamines,

“ and roses, climb in wild profusion
“ over every branch. The bottom is
“ a fine short turf, which the hand of
“ our predecessor, a gentleman of the
“ most exquisite taste, has abundantly
“ filled with violets, primroses, cow-
“ slips, and the variety of flowers which
“ this delightful season of the year
“ produces. There is a bank thrown
“ up all round, covered also with turf,
“ which serves for seats. In this beau-
“ tiful retreat, which is large enough
“ to contain six or eight people, we
“ shall frequently entertain our neigh-
“ bours, in a rustic way, with tea, syl-
“ labub, fruit, &c. The front of this
“ sweet place (and the luxuriance of
“ the trees leaves only a small en-
“ trance) discovers at a distance the
“ mill, which is just near enough to
“ admit of hearing the water-fall : and
“ beyond that, on an eminence, stands
“ the

“ the village-church, with here and
“ there a few scattered cottages. The
“ birds, never in the least molested,
“ build their habitations securely in this
“ delightful recess; so that, from April
“ to October, we shall have the plea-
“ sure of being regaled with the sweet-
“ est music.

“ I know you too well, my Ophelia,
“ to be in dread of your raillery on the
“ pleasure I express: I am sure you
“ would equally take delight in the
“ numerous beauties of so sweet a place
“ as this.

“ Ah, my amiable Ophelia, the mid-
“ dle walk of life is indeed the only
“ road to true happiness! Poverty,
“ tinctured with a thousand ills, may
“ be contented, but it never can be
“ happy. If you shut out from the

“ first enjoyments of life the pencil,
“ the book, the pen, and the ‘ con-
“ cord of sweet sounds,’ I am inclined
“ to think the humble cottager is not
“ so enviable an object as he is com-
“ monly represented to be. And how
“ many cares is greatness sensible of!
“ I need not be at the pains to enu-
“ merate them; I need not draw the
“ picture to you, as those parts which
“ would compose it, are visible enough
“ to every eye. Indeed, my Love,
“ situated as we are, we have but little
“ to wish for. Sufficiently affluent to
“ relieve the distresses of the poor, and
“ likewise sufficiently informed to be
“ charmed with the liberal arts, we
“ feel none of the sorrows attendant on
“ poverty: and while we are sheltered
“ in the vale of mediocrity from the
“ storms which terrify those who reside
“ on the hill of greatness, to us rank
“ and

“ and splendor have not the least
“ temptation. What a happiness this is
“ to be in possession of! You cer-
“ tainly must think so.

For the many whom titles alone can allure,
Or the blazon of ermine and gules;
I wrap myself round in my lowness secure,
And am rid of just so many fools!

“ says the ingenious Whitehead; and
“ with him joins your Henrietta.

“ What a long discourse! you’ll
“ cry. ‘ Surely, Henrietta, you have
“ been copying one of Mr. Alwin’s
“ sermons.’ — No truly, my Love, I
“ wish it were half as good: but now
“ you have reminded me of it, I must
“ think of bidding you adieu; for I
“ have got on hand a considerable
“ deal of business, some of which is of
“ the greatest importance, and requires

“ the engagement of my early and
“ close attention.

“ I am now come to a conclusion.—
“ Farewell then, my sweetest girl ;
“ you know I am most truly

“ Your ever faithful

“ and affectionate

“ HENRIETTA ALWIN.

“ Okehampton-Abbey,

“ April 15th.”

The cheerful and agreeable stile of this letter almost entirely restored the vivacity of Ophelia. The reflections it contained on greatness and poverty, at once spoke to her heart, and exactly suited her present sensations : and although

though that part drew a tear from her eye, before she had ended, a delighted smile was seen to dimple her cheek; which gladdened the hearts of her sympathizing and best friends; they heard with true pleasure her account of the manner in which she had spent the day; and were highly delighted with Lady Clifford's affectionate behaviour towards her; nor did they longer wonder at the prepossession which Ophelia felt in favour of her noble friend, although they could not by any means at first conceive the cause of it. But, in truth, it was nothing extraordinary, for Ophelia had never before seen so dignified a mien, or a manner so charming as that of Lady Clifford; and in the spring of life enthusiasm in the bosom of genius, like the needle, is attracted by the magnet of elegance and complacency; but these were sensations which

which, even in her earliest days, Mrs. Overbury had never been in the least susceptible of, and consequently could not comprehend.

Before our lovely heroine retired to her rest, she took another survey of her beloved portrait; and the doing this revived in her mind all the melancholy emotions she had before endeavoured to banish. She shed innumerable tears over this almost worshipped picture. She knelt to it; she intreated it to bless her; she paid it all the homage which the most enthusiastic affection could dictate; and it was, with the utmost regret that she quitted it to seek that rest which nevertheless she very much was in need of: and then confused and mournful dreams disturbed her sleep. The forms of her parents glided before her; they smiled on her; they

they spoke in admiration of their child; Lady Clifford was with them; they embraced her; and, pointing to Ophelia, seemed to bespeak her protection for their daughter; she was then hastily severed from them, and compelled up a steep and dreary mountain; and when she had gained the summit of it, the airy spirits of her father and mother both waved her to the heaven they were in search of, and gave her a glimpse of the celestial mansions: and as she strove to follow them, she unexpectedly found herself detained by a gentle violence; and while she endeavoured to loosen herself, they vanished from her sight, with a most benignant smile, and she awakened with the conflict. “Oh stay!” she then exclaimed, “yet stay, beloved spirits! bear with the weakness of mortality, and
“resent

“resent not that I cannot yet follow
“you.”

At length Ophelia thoroughly awakened from her interesting reverie; the moon shone bright into her chamber; and she started up, to convince herself that she was still under the hospitable roof of her affectionate friends; and, supporting her head with her arm, she recollected all the wonderful circumstances of her dream. A most awful and chilling horror shook every nerve of her body on her remembrance of the form of her dear parents; and it was with the greatest difficulty that she was able to compose her extremely agitated spirits; nor could the light of reason, for a considerable space of time, prove strong enough to dispel the deep impression from her mind. In vain did Ophelia recollect that she “did but
“dream”

“dream”—and turned her eyes round, with a sort of dread, lest they should encounter the ærial shape of each departed parent. But then, remembering that even, if they should appear, their intention could not possibly be to distress her, she endeavoured to reconcile herself, and calm her mind: and in this she at last succeeded.

The morning now came, and surprised Ophelia in these contemplations, while neither sleep dwelt on her eyes, nor refreshment in her weary and fatigued spirits. It is not to be wondered at that the dear girl when she got up, was more tired than at her laying down. After these ruminations had in some degree subsided, Ophelia arose from her uneasy couch, and bethought herself of retiring for a while to the garden; where she hoped that
the

the beauties of nature, the fragrant scents, and vernal air, would somewhat relieve her of the painful languor she was now labouring under, and unable much longer to endure it.

CHAPTER VIII.

SYMPATHY.

IN the most deep and solemn contemplation did the melancholy and dejected Ophelia stroll slowly through Mr. Overbury's garden; and instinctively opening a small wicket at the bottom of it, extended her walk down a shady lane, till she came to a stile, from whence she had a distant view of Lumley-House. While she was leaning on this stile, in a melancholy attitude, she continued still to reflect; and at length, with a deep-fetched sigh, lamentably exclaimed, from her favourite bard,

Spirits

Spirits of peace, where are ye? Are you
gone

And left me here in wretchedness behind you?
They brought me garlands, which I feel
I am not worthy yet to wear. — I shall as-
suredly!

The moment she had pronounced the
last word, a voice from the hedge ex-
claimed,

“The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy
“orisons,
“Remember me!”

She started in extreme amazement,
and, looking round, perceived Lord
Clifford, followed by Captain Saville,
who advanced, smiling, towards her.

“So early abroad!” continued his
Lordship. “Your devotions seem so
“earnest, Miss Melbourne, that I could
“not help intreating you to think of

“me

“ me in them. I hope I have not
“ alarmed you? You do not take us
“ for the ‘ Spirits of Peace ’ you have
“ been invoking?”

Ophelia perceiving, by his mentioning these words, that he had overheard her, blushed, and replied, — ‘ Indeed, my Lord, my meditations were of so grave a nature, that the sudden interruption of them has alarmed me considerably.’ “ I will not,” said he, “ think of apologizing for so doing, since, if I may judge from your appearance, they they were not very salutary.” ‘ Indeed, my Lord,’ replied Ophelia, ‘ they were not; and I kindly thank your Lordship for dismissing them.’ “ But,” said Lord Clifford, with a smile, “ what, for Heaven’s sake, could your exclamation mean?” Ophelia made no other answer

answer than a forced smile; and his Lordship perceiving her rather unwilling to give him a reply to the question, did not think proper to urge it, but changed the conversation immediately.

“ You are, I understand,” continued Lord Clifford to Ophelia, “ to have a
“ long *tete-a-tete* with Lady Clifford
“ to-day. Captain Saville and I have
“ been quarrelling with her, about you,
“ most amazingly.” “ About me, my
“ Lord ?” replied she, with astonishment. “ Yes,” answered Captain Saville; “ I cannot but consider it as
“ somewhat selfish of her Ladyship to
“ invite you, Miss Melbourne, when
“ she knew Lord Clifford and I were
“ going out.” She only smiled, and courtesied.— After a little more chat, they parted.

Ophelia

Ophelia now thought it proper to return home, where she found Mr. and Mrs. Overbury waiting breakfast for her. She had not any idea of her having been gone so long; and found, that as she had not walked far, she must have moved exceeding slowly. Mrs. Overbury made a remark, that her usual melancholy was considerably increased, which she was sorry for; and enquired if she had been indisposed, as she got up that morning at so early an hour? Miss Melbourne answered, No; but that she could not sleep; and then related her meeting with Lord Clifford. They now breakfasted; and Ophelia began to dress herself for the day: this she had hardly time to finish, ere Lord Clifford's carriage arrived at the door to fetch her; and with a heavy heart she stepped into it.

Miss

Miss Melbourne arrived at Lumley-House before she had power to discard the recollections which oppressed her mind ; and was received by Lady Clifford with the utmost degree of kindness. Her Ladyship expressed herself highly pleased, with the hopes she entertained of spending a charming day, and made several apologies for receiving Ophelia in her dressing-room. She likewise added, “ I thought that I already knew enough of my young friend, to judge that she would prefer convenience to shew ; and therefore did not quit my usual and favourite apartment.”

Ophelia bowed, with a most grateful smile, and remarked, with real delight, the beauty of the prospect from the windows : they looked into the park, which was very extensive, and laid out
in

in a noble and most exquisite taste. Fortunately for the proprietors, there was a smooth and flow river which glided in meanders through it, and bestowed at once a cheerful verdure, and was a peculiar beauty in itself. The park was almost encircled by an old wood; the trees of which were exceedingly thick and large, and only here and there cut into vistas, through which the eye caught some distant object. Amongst them the parsonage was very conspicuous; and to the right of that, a large octagon building in the wood itself, drew the particular attention of Ophelia, who turning suddenly to Lady Clifford, begged to know for what it was designed?

A deep sigh from Ophelia's noble friend made her repent the question; but which, however, the Countess an-

swered in these words : “ It is, my be-
“ loved Miss Melbourne, a temple
“ dedicated, by my father, to conjugal and parental happiness ; and was
“ built on the birth of a beloved son.
“ Alas ! how little did that dear, although implacable father, think he
“ should in future regret the hour, and
“ consider that amiable son he loved
“ so well, rather a misfortune than a
“ blessing !”

Lady Clifford wept at the recital of this ; and Ophelia made the best apology for her unfortunate question, by a graceful silence and a flood of sympathetic tears. Throwing down her work, her Ladyship clasped the amiable girl in her arms, and exclaimed, “ Weep
“ not, my Ophelia ; thou dear and interesting resemblance ! Good Heavens ! is it possible !” With such broken

ken

ken and unintelligible sentences, she burst afresh into tears, while Ophelia, impelled by an irresistible emotion, sunk on her knees, and pressed first one of Lady Clifford's hands, then the other to her lips, exclaiming, "Can you, can you forgive me? Alas! could I foresee?" — "Thou charming and insinuating creature, do not afflict yourself. Alas! these remembrances have in them nothing of pain. Ah, if they had, could I love you as I do?"

Inexplicable as these words were, Ophelia could not apply them to herself; yet they sunk deep into her heart, and engraved themselves there forever. A considerable time had elapsed before they were able to compose themselves enough to sink into an indifferent conversation; but which, however,

when once fairly begun, Ophelia exerted herself to the utmost in support of; and she succeeded so amazingly well, that the entrance of dinner was much regretted both by Lady Clifford and herself.

When the cloth was removed, and the servants all withdrawn, Lady Clifford intreated, in a very solicitous manner, that Ophelia would be kind enough to oblige her with some music; and to this Miss Melbourne most readily consented; and at a second request Ophelia sung; which she did in that simple and *touchant* style which speaks to the heart. Her noble friend was affected, even to tears, and expressed her admiration and pleasure in the most flattering terms of Ophelia's captivating performance.

Lady

Lady Clifford took occasion to express her most sincere wish that ever Eugenia would give her the hopes of her performing in a similar stile. “But
 “alas! my dear Miss Melbourne,” said her Ladyship, “for I speak to you
 “as a friend, whose understanding is
 “mature beyond her years, — she is so
 “inattentive, so unstable! Indeed,
 “all my efforts are to no manner of
 “purpose; yet I cannot but say she
 “has a very good heart, if I could but
 “inspire her with a little emulation:
 “but I much fear it is beyond the
 “reach of human power.” Here she
 fetched a deep sigh, and continued,
 “My regret would be still much more
 “poignant, had I not a son. He is
 “now on his travels, and has lately been
 “much indisposed; but now, thank
 “Heaven, thoroughly recovered. I
 “had the happiness of receiving seve-

“ral letters during his confinement,
“from a most charming young man,
“who travels with him, and who is
“counter part of my Osmond in every
“respect, except that he is extremely
“handsome. To say the truth, my
“Edward is plain, while all the ladies
“agree in pronouncing the Marquis
“of Belvoir quite irresistible! But
“will you be so kind as to indulge
“me with your pardon for troubling
“you with my affairs? When you
“agreed to spend the day with an old
“woman, pray did you also take into
“the account that she was to be a
“loquacious one? I therefore must
“beg your indulgence.”

With one of the most expressive of
Miss Melbourne's looks, she replied,
“I have no words, Madam, to ex-
“press the gratitude which I at this
“moment

“ moment feel for your confidence, or
“ the interest I take in all your affairs.
“ I beg your Ladyship will, however,
“ permit me to say, that you shall ne-
“ ver have occasion to repent of the
“ one, nor shall I ever feel less of the
“ other !” “ My sweet girl,” answered
Lady Clifford, “ is it possible that you
“ can really prefer the society of one so
“ much older, to the gaieties of youth ?”
“ Ah, Madam,” replied Ophelia, “ is
“ it to be supposed that while I am
“ with you, I should regret the gaieties
“ you speak of ? Surely not : to be thus
“ honoured, thus distinguished, ex-
“ ceeds in pleasure all the flutter and
“ dissipation of a crowd, even,” she
added, with a sigh, “ did the present
“ melancholy I now feel so heavily on
“ my spirits, but allow me to enjoy
“ them !”

Lady Clifford, after some little pause, said, ‘ And may I not—no, I will not ask the cause of this depression you have mentioned. I know that my assistance cannot be of the least avail to its removal ; and I also know that when friendship has not the power to console, confidence should neither be asked nor granted. I know that you stand not in need of advice while you are under the protection of Mrs Overbury ; but then I have this request to make, which I hope you will promise to comply with ; which is, Should you ever wish for any thing in the power of affection to bestow, you will remember that you have a friend at Lumley-House, who will continually love, and be ever ready to do you every service, my charming Ophelia, with the utmost pleasure.’

Miss

Miss Melbourne's feelings on this occasion, rendered her, for some moments, incapable of giving any answer. At last, suddenly catching hold of the hand which Lady Clifford extended towards her, she pressed it to her lips with that emotion which was not in her power any longer to restrain or disguise. Then she exclaimed, with a degree of rapture too difficult to be described, " Must I not, — shall I not
" be one of the most ungrateful and
" ungenerous creatures that ever yet
" existed in the world, could I ever
" forget this honour, this unbounded
" extent of kindness which you have
" conferred upon me? Oh Madam,
" I can never, never while I breathe,
" have the means in my power of re-
" paying it: but this I know, and
" this being all I can do, — That the
" dearest and most tender remem-
" brance

"brance shall augment the affection
 "I have ever felt for your Ladyship,
 "since the first moment in which I
 "had the honour of being made ac-
 "quainted with you!

"wonder how the pressed it to her lips
 "with that emotion which was not in
 "her power any longer to restrain
 "alights. Then she exclaimed with a
 "degree of rapture too difficult to be
 "described, "Must I not — shall I not
 "be one of the most successful and
 "generous creatures that ever yet
 "existed in the world, could I ever
 "forget this honour, this unbounded
 "extent of kindness which you have
 "conferred upon me? Oh Madam,
 "I can never, never while I breathe
 "have the means in my power of re-
 "paying it. But this I know, and
 "this being all I can do — I will do
 "my best, and most tender remem-
 "brance

CHAP.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ANSWER.

MOST delightfully did the day pass with Ophelia and her noble friend in these interesting conversations; and they saw, with regret, the evening soon arrive, which brought home the rest of the family; and after half an hour's conversation, Ophelia took her leave, and returned home to supper.—A night of rest and comfort restored to Miss Melbourne a part of that bloom which her late distresses had robbed her of, and gave her a sufficient share of spirits to answer Mrs. Alwin's letter; which she did in the following manner:

F 6

' My

‘ My amiable friend’s most welcome
‘ epistle merits the earliest acknowledg-
‘ ment; and I should have written yef-
‘ terday, had I not been engaged out
‘ the whole of the day.

‘ How I have been charmed with
‘ your descriptions, my beloved Hen-
‘ rietta! I imagine continually that I
‘ behold the charming spot which you
‘ have so well delineated; and you
‘ may be well assured, that I feel in-
‘ finitely chagrined, when I reflect
‘ on being such a number of tedious
‘ miles distant from the friend of my
‘ infancy. The friend of my infancy!
‘ Ah, how truly a friend indeed!

‘ Henrietta, I have a heart so occu-
‘ pied by its own sorrows, as scarcely
‘ to leave room for the enjoyment of
‘ your happiness. Did you ever ima-
‘ gine

‘ gine I was half so selfish a creature ?
‘ No ; for you was not acquainted with
‘ my being so wretched ; and yet, my
‘ Henrietta, you have shewn me in
‘ your dear letter, that what I lament
‘ I ought to rejoice in.

‘ Your sentiments are perfectly just,
‘ as far as they go ; but it is not the
‘ loss of rank that I regret ; it is, my
‘ Henrietta, the loss of maternal fond-
‘ ness of parental love ! Perhaps too,
‘ my pride is hurt by the reflection that
‘ all I am I owe to the charity of
‘ strangers ; for so were your dear fa-
‘ ther and mother, when first I in-
‘ truded on their goodness. Oh that
‘ it were in my power to repay them !
‘ but that is impossible : their virtue
‘ must, and it will, be their whole re-
‘ ward. The labour of my life, nay
‘ even that life itself, were but suffi-
‘ cient

‘cient to acknowledge their kindness
‘and yours: Yours, my dear beloved
‘friend, which, without the least mix-
‘ture of envy and discontent, cheer-
‘fully saw an intruder assume an air of
‘equality with yourself, and, without
‘even a hinted reproach, bore all her
‘caprices and petulancies! Can I
‘thank thee for all this, dear Henri-
‘etta, as I ought to do? No, my ex-
‘cellent tutorefs, it is impossible for
‘me. Give a look then into the heart
‘you have formed yourself, and read
‘there my gratitude engraved in inde-
‘lible characters!

‘But let me no longer trespass on
‘your time by this melancholy language,
‘which you will readily comprehend;
‘and I beg that you will as readily
‘excuse me.

‘Your

‘ Your application of Whitehead’s
‘ pointed sentiments is extremely just.
‘ That poem, I must remark, is a great
‘ favourite of mine. Although I do
‘ not altogether accord with the whole
‘ of the sentiments contained in it, my
‘ heart is too susceptible to say “ More
‘ ease is my humble request !” though
‘ Heaven knows, at present, I experi-
‘ ence not the greatest portion even of
‘ that “ Something too much of this.”
‘ — You will join in this opinion with
‘ me, I know.

‘ I am full of quotations to-day, you
‘ see. But did you never make the
‘ observation, That melancholy brings
‘ to one’s mind the expressions of o-
‘ thers, which exactly describe our own
‘ sensations more than any other affec-
‘ tion? Probably, because it is the
‘ stillest

‘ stillest, and most inclined to remem-
‘ brance.

‘ I spent yesterday most agreeably
‘ with Lady Clifford. She interests
‘ me to a wonderful degree indeed. I
‘ well remember you have often smiled
‘ at your romantic Ophelia, and most
‘ kindly endeavoured to stem the tide
‘ of sensation which overwhelmed my
‘ heart on any extraordinary occasion;
‘ but, in truth, you never had the good
‘ fortune yet to succeed: but to tell
‘ you plainly, I never wished that you
‘ should.

‘ To return to Lady Clifford. She
‘ seems to favour me with a consider-
‘ able share of her affection, and highly
‘ charms me by her elegant senti-
‘ ments, as well as her elegant and ac-
‘ curate manner of expressing them.

‘ Her

' Her Ladyship has been one of the
 ' most lovely women of her time, and
 ' has a trait of melancholy which ren-
 ' ders her still more insinuating,

' How I keep scribbling on, without
 ' ever considering of how much conse-
 ' quence your time is to all your con-
 ' nections, nor that my too kind friends
 ' have engaged to force me out this
 ' afternoon to tea. I have only time
 ' left to assure you that I anticipate
 ' highly the transports of meeting you
 ' the latter end of the summer, and that
 ' I am ever most truly

' Your much obliged

' and grateful

' OPHELIA.

' To you I have no other name;
 ' for you know how little right I have
 ' to

“to a second. Omit not to present
“my most sincere respects to my friend
“Mr. Alwin.

“April 21st.”

After finishing this epistle, the melancholy writer of it accompanied her friends to one of those stupid visits, where even cards are a relief to the fatigue of doing nothing, and the languor and *ennui* which always attend a total want of conversation, and a mixture of dull and tiresome people. From this visit Ophelia returned still more melancholy than when she went, and infinitely more peevish.

Several days, after this disagreeable visit, passed away, without being marked by the least particular occurrence in the transactions of Miss Melbourne; during

during which time she continued to engage herself in the domestic affairs of the family, with the highest approbation of Mr. and Mrs. Overbury. The kindness and affection with which she was continually treated by them, in many instances, surpassed even that tenderness which parents naturally have for their own offspring; and they had the pleasure of seeing their attachment was not bestowed on one who was undeserving.

At length the carriage of Lord Clifford arrived at the door, and Lady Eugenia descended from it alone. Ophelia, fearing that her beloved Lady Clifford was taken ill, immediately flew to meet her visitant, and to enquire the state of her Ladyship's health. Eugenia immediately acquainted her that she was come to solicit the favour of her company

company to Lumley-House, where Lady Clifford was confined by a strained ankle, which she had received by stumbling over a stone in the park. Ophelia, much concerned at the circumstance, applied for and obtained Mrs. Overbury's consent, and then attended Lady Eugenia.

As the carriage of Lord Clifford arrived at the door, and Lady Eugenia descended from it, Ophelia, fearing that her beloved Lady Clifford was taken ill, immediately flew to meet her, and to enquire the cause of her Ladyship's trouble. She immediately accompanied her that she was going to follow the favour of her

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CHAPTER X.

A TEMPLE.

LADY Clifford received our amiable heroine with smiles of the sweetest complacency, and seemed extremely pleased with her condolences on the disagreeable lameness which she now experienced.

The morning passed in conversation of the most rational kind, and, after dinner was over, Ophelia and Lady Eugenia took a walk in the garden together, and from thence proceeded to the park. An irresistible curiosity now impelled Ophelia towards the temple, which had been the subject of her conversation

versation with Lady Clifford a few days before. As they approached nearer it, Lady Eugenia said, " Here is
 " a very beautiful building, Miss Mel-
 " bourne, which probably you would
 " like to see: I believe I have a key." In saying this, they went up the steps; and an inscription over the door, first caught the attention of Ophelia. It was as follows:

Sacred to Conjugal and Parental Happiness!

This Temple was built

by

EDWARD LUMLEY, Earl Lumley,

on

The Birth of his Eldest Son.

On their entrance, Miss Melbourne perceived, that each division of this octagon

octagon building contained a most exquisite painting, representing some particular character or groupe from history; which she thought, reflected the highest honour on the Parental and Conjugal name. Here the noble Roman Cornelia shewed her children as her greatest jewels; and here Coriolanus yielded that peace to his family which he had refused to the pusillanimous senate of Rome. Andromache and Hector too, were here seen to embrace for the last time, while the infant Astyanax shrunk from the nodding plume on the helmet of his warlike father.

Ophelia, whose attention was highly engaged by the beautiful effect of these representations, took particular notice that between each of these interesting performances, there was a whole length statue

Statue of exquisite workmanship, which very much attracted her admiration: but that painting which principally drew the attention of Miss Melbourne's eyes, was a large picture, representing a gentleman who appeared to be young, tall, graceful, and animated, leaning over the chair of a young lady, whose face turned towards him, who expressed the placid serenity of a Madona, and, at the same time, gave a forcible remembrance of Lady Clifford. On her lap was seated a sweet infant, of a few months old, playing with some flowers on a table before them, on which lay a musical instrument, a box of colours, and a book; where distinctly might be read those lines from Thomson:

“What is the world to them?
It's pomp, it's pleasure, and it's nonsense all;
Who in each other clasp whatever fair
High fancy form, and lavish hearts can wish.”

Ophelia

Ophelia gazed on this charming groupe, till she felt herself affected almost to tears ; and Lady Eugenia said, “ Don’t you think the lady something like my mamma ? ” “ Indeed I do,” said Ophelia ; “ these, I suppose, were the Earl and Countess ? ” “ They are, and that is the child at whose birth the temple was built. My mother was not born till after that :— little did my grandfather think, he should die unreconciled to that heir, whose birth he so rejoiced in ! ”—— “ Good Heavens ! you shock me extremely ; I would not be impertinent, but, may I ask, what singular occurrence could occasion such a change ? ” “ Oh no, it is not in the least impertinent ; but you will be kind enough not to mention what I shall tell you.” “ By no means ; but if it is a secret—” “ Oh no, numbers of people knew the
Vol. I. G “ affair

“ affair at the time it happened, but it
“ distresses mamma so, we never speak
“ of it; but if you will sit down, I’ll
“ tell you all I know.—In the first
“ place, I must inform you, that the
“ Countess died when young; Lord
“ Lumley was about ten years old, and
“ my mother eight: at fourteen, the
“ young Lord was sent to college,
“ where he continued five years; and
“ then travelled in France and Italy
“ till he was one-and-twenty; when
“ he was recalled, to take possession of
“ a large independent fortune, left him
“ by an uncle. This seat had, till
“ then, been my grandfather’s favour-
“ ite residence; but he now exchanged
“ it with his son for one in Somerset-
“ shire. My uncle staid here several
“ months, and then with some ac-
“ quaintance he went to spend a short
“ time in Dorsetshire; and from this
“ excursion

“ excursion he returned to his father’s
“ seat in Somersetshire, as I have heard
“ Lady Clifford say, extremely altered.
“ He was melancholy, seemingly op-
“ pressed by some secret grief, and
“ often made short excursions from
“ home.—My mother, who tenderly
“ loved him, often entreated to know
“ the cause of his distress. For some
“ time, he eluded all her endeavours;
“ but at length, he yielding to the
“ tenderness of her supplications, told
“ her that he was privately married to
“ a young lady of the greatest beauty
“ and accomplishments; that he had
“ met with her at Dorsetshire, at his
“ friend’s house; that with great dif-
“ ficulty he prevailed on her to give
“ him her hand; that on pretence of
“ visiting a relation, she had met him
“ in London, where, as they were
“ both of age, he easily procured a

“ licence, and they were married in a
“ week after; that she returned to her
“ friend’s house, and he to his father’s,
“ from whence he had been many
“ times to visit her; and that she was
“ soon to remove to his seat in Dorset-
“ shire, while her friends were to ima-
“ gine her in France, till he could
“ make it convenient to declare his
“ marriage; that he was extremely
“ hurt at the necessity he was under of
“ subjecting her to a situation so dis-
“ agreeable to a woman of delicacy.
“ He declared she was the most amiable
“ of women, and that he waited till a
“ treaty of marriage his father had
“ proposed should go off, to own her
“ as his wife; that her father and mo-
“ ther were both dead, and she had no
“ near relations: her father had been a
“ clergyman. He concluded by con-
“ juring his sister to go, under pretence
“ of

“ of seeing his seat, and make her a
“ visit of friendship and countenance.
“ On her objecting her father’s displea-
“ sure, should he discover the intent
“ of her journey, he told her that his
“ house was in so remote a situation,
“ no one need know she was there, ex-
“ cept his servants, who were strangers
“ to her; and therefore she might as-
“ sume any name she pleased, and only
“ confess her true one to Lady Lum-
“ ley. The Earl’s consent was readily
“ procured, and my mother went to
“ West-Hill, where, as she says to this
“ hour, she was introduced to all that
“ is amiable in woman in her new
“ sister; she staid six weeks, known to
“ the servants only by the name of Miss
“ Arnold, while to her brother and
“ sister alone she acknowledged the
“ title of Lady Matilda Lumley.

“ These days, she says, were some
“ of the happiest she has ever known;
“ they were passed in a constant routine
“ of elegant and social amusements,
“ and reciprocal instances of tenderness
“ and affection. Lord Lumley found
“ in his wife and sister all that his
“ heart required of happiness, while
“ his charming Laura loved him with
“ a purity of passion unknown to the
“ interested. I believe I repeat to you
“ the very words I have heard my mo-
“ ther use in speaking of this happy
“ time, which fled away but too swift-
“ ly; and she returned to Somerset-
“ shire, promising Lady Lumley to
“ come again when she lay-in.

“ Feigning an extreme admiration
“ of her brother's seat, she once more
“ accompanied him thither; and soon
“ after her arrival, Lady Lumley lay-
“ in

“ in of a boy ; but he lived only six
“ weeks. My mother staid there some
“ time, and then went to Somerset-
“ shire ; where Lord Clifford soon af-
“ ter paid his addressee, and married
“ her. Of course, she went to live at
“ his seat in Devonshire ; and soon af-
“ ter, Lord Lumley discovered his
“ marriage ; at which the old Earl was
“ so exasperated, that he forbade him
“ ever to come near his house.

“ Lady Clifford continued to visit
“ them ; and in the first year of her
“ marriage my eldest brother was
“ born, who is now turned of twenty.
“ Two more years slipped away, at the
“ end of which my grandfather was
“ taken ill ; and relenting in his last
“ moments, altered his will, and left
“ all to his son, except my mother’s
“ fortune. He sent for them both,

“ but they came too late ; he was dead ;
“ and after they had overcome the first
“ shock, they each returned to their
“ own seat : and this house was, as you
“ may have heard, left untenanted for
“ many years.

“ In less than a twelvemonth, Lady
“ Lumley lay-in of a daughter ; another
“ year passed, and the Earl went to
“ town, for a short time, on some bu-
“ siness.—Fatal journey !—In a week’s
“ time, he alarmed Lady Lumley, by
“ returning at five o’clock in the morn-
“ ing ! He told her, that unfortunately
“ at a Coffee-house, he had got into a
“ dispute with an officer of some rank
“ in the army ; that high words passing
“ between them, they had fought, and
“ his antagonist was killed ; and he
“ must set off immediately for France.

“ His

“ His faithful wife insisted on going
“ with him; and, unable to leave her
“ beloved infant behind, they all de-
“ parted in a hired chaise, with post
“ horses, and one servant, for the Con-
“ tinent. Before he went, he wrote a
“ few lines to my mother, to mention
“ these particulars.

“ The end of my tedious story will
“ fill you with horror.—The packet
“ in which they embarked was lost in
“ a violent storm of wind, and Orian,
“ and every one on board perished!

“ You weep, my dear Miss Mel-
“ bourne;—judge of the affliction of
“ Lady Clifford! For some years
“ she laid no claim to the estate,
“ (though, by her father’s will, she
“ was to inherit it, in case her brother
“ died without children) in hopes some

“ friendly incident might have saved
“ him; but all hopes vanishing, she at
“ length asserted her title, and it was
“ readily admitted. Her affliction at
“ this terrible misfortune has never
“ wholly subsided—the slightest inci-
“ dent renews it. You, I am sure, can
“ pity her: you, whose heart is con-
“ tinually alive to others woes, and
“ ever striving to alleviate the miseries
“ even of those with whom you have
“ but a small share of acquaintance,
“ will pour out a torrent of sympathy
“ for her Ladyship.”

Lost in an excess of attention and concern, Ophelia scarcely perceived that Lady Eugenia had done speaking. At length, with a deep sigh, she thanked her for the interesting communication she had given her, and immediately returned

returned to the house, most heavily laden with an additional melancholy, which appeared too visibly in her countenance.

“ You have been very good,” said
 “ my dear sister, the day
 “ Clifford, as they entered the drawing-
 “ room; I am afraid you did not re-
 “ collect how stupid I am without you;
 “ but, Miss Melbourne!—Eugenia,
 “ what eyes are these!—What have
 “ you been doing?—Do you know, I
 “ shall chide presently; what is the
 “ matter?—Nothing, mamma,
 “ answered Lady Eugenia, “ only we have
 “ been recollecting a melancholy story;
 “ “ Well,” said Lady Clifford, “ I have
 “ got such news!—Now, Eugenia,
 “ what will you give for a letter?—
 “ I am sure, from Clifford, replied
 “ Eugenia.

CHAPTER XI.

INTELLIGENCE.

“**YOU** have been gone a great while,
“ my dear girls,” said Lady Clifford, as they entered the drawing-room; “ I am afraid you did not re-
“ collect how stupid I am without you;
“ but, Miss Melbourne!—Eugenia,
“ what eyes are these!—What have
“ you been doing?—Do you know, I
“ shall chide presently; what is the
“ matter?”——‘ Nothing, mamma,’
answered Lady Eugenia, ‘ only we have
‘ been recollecting a melancholy story.’
“ Well,” said Lady Clifford, “ I have
“ got such news!—Now, Eugenia,
“ what will you give for a letter?”—
“ Ah, mamma, from Osmond?” replied
Eugenia.

Eugenia. "What an excellent guess
"you have ! Well, to reward it, read
"this aloud ;" giving her a letter,
which Eugenia opened hastily, and read
as follows :

"THE most indulgent of mothers
"will, I know, receive with a sincere
"pleasure, the intelligence of her son's
"health, happiness, and grateful re-
"membrance of his most excellent pa-
"rents. Alas ! my dearest Madam, I
"blush, when I recollect how little I
"have done to deserve the affection you
"have always delighted to shew me,
"and I have delighted to receive ; the
"study of my life shall be to acknow-
"ledge your goodness to me. To wave,
"however, the profession of a duty,
"which only my actions can ascertain,
"I proceed to information, which,
"I flatter myself, you will not be sorry
"to

‘ to receive : it is briefly this, You may
‘ expect, in a very short time, to see
‘ the most respectful of sons at the feet
‘ of his parents, and the most affecti-
‘ onate of brothers in the arms of his
‘ dear Eugenia !——Oh, my beloved
‘ mother, what tender emotions rise in
‘ my bosom at the delightful idea !—
‘ a voluntary exile from all I love, for
‘ upwards of three years, at length I
‘ return to my native country ; I re-
‘ turn, I hope, undebased by the fop-
‘ peries of France, or the effeminacies
‘ of Italy ; yet bearing in my heart a
‘ sincere admiration of the excellencies
‘ of each kingdom.

‘ My beloved friend Belvour accom-
‘ panies me. *Les belles Francoises* declare
‘ that he is *tres charmante* ! He insists
‘ on my going with him first to West-
‘ bury-Castle, to see his father and Lady

‘ Sophia,

‘ Sophia, whom he promises to engage
‘ to come to Lumley-House, long ere
‘ the expiration of the summer. You,
‘ who are so well acquainted with my
‘ heart, will readily believe I have no
‘ objection to this plan. We shall not
‘ stay there long ; for, in spite of its
‘ attractions, I shall wish to embrace
‘ you all.

‘ Adieu, my dearest mother. You
‘ know that I am,

‘ With the utmost respect,

‘ Your affectionate

‘ and obedient

‘ O. S M O N D.

‘ I write to my father. Remember
‘ me most tenderly to Eugenia. Bel-
‘ your entreats you will believe only
‘ my affection can exceed his.

‘ Paris,
‘ April 16th.’

Here

Here Lady Eugenia ceased. In truth, Ophelia wondered how it had been possible for her to read so long, with so little emotion; and they each congratulated the other on this charming event.

Ophelia had remarked, that while Lady Eugenia was reading the latter part of the letter, Lady Clifford had observed her face with the most earnest attention, as if she wished to discover something by the expression it assumed; but she must have been very penetrating to have done this, by the minutest scrutiny. In truth, few faces were more entirely void of information than Lady Eugenia's, except that now and then her features wore a kind of jealous fear, as if she fancied every body laughed at her. Strange as this expression may appear, it was literally the truth; Lady Eugenia

Eugenia having generally that idea about her, especially when any one in her company smiled, without assigning some reason; nor was it always ill-founded, for sometimes she made such ridiculous speeches, through inattention, that even the gravity of sixty was not proof against them.

The conversation, after this, was wholly taken up in ascertaining the time when probably the two gentlemen might be expected.

Lord Clifford calling Lady Eugenia, the Countess and Ophelia were left together. An interval of silence followed Eugenia's departure; for Lady Clifford leaning her head on her hand, seemed lost in deep and pleasing meditation. Starting at length from her reverie, she exclaimed, "My dear Miss Melbourne,
"can

“ can you excuse me ? I protest I had
“ wholly lost myself in the pleasing
“ anticipation of Osmond’s return.”
Ophelia made some slight answer, and
Lady Clifford went on—“ Perhaps it is
“ not easy for any one to conceive the
“ strange and various emotions of my
“ heart : the arrival of an amiable and
“ beloved son cannot be a matter of in-
“ difference to a fond mother.” ‘ Cer-
“ tainly not, Ma’am,’ answered Ophe-
lia ; ‘ and I am almost tempted to envy
‘ my Lord Osmond his happiness. How
‘ charming must be the meeting of pa-
‘ rents so excellent, with so beloved a
‘ son !’

Some melancholy recollections suf-
fused her fine eyes with tears ; which
Lady Clifford noticing, said, “ Your
“ parents have been dead some years,
“ my love, I believe ?” ‘ Yes, Ma’am ;
‘ I have

‘ I have no recollection of them.’—
“ Poor child !” said Lady Clifford,
softly ; then aloud—“ Did they live
“ in this part of the world, my dear
“ Ophelia ?” —Extremely confused,
Ophelia hesitated, ‘ I—I—believe not,
‘ Ma’am ; but I do not recollect ever
‘ to have heard Mr. Overbury say.’—
“ How old was you, my dear, when
“ you first came hither ?” — ‘ About a
‘ twelvemonth.’ “ Oh, you then cer-
“ tainly cannot recollect them. Which
“ of your parents does Mr. Overbury
“ think you most like ?” ‘ Oh, my
‘ father, Madam,’ involuntarily replied
Ophelia ; for the portrait had fully de-
termined that. “ Indeed,” said Lady
Clifford, with a sigh, “ he was, I think,
“ Mrs. Overbury’s brother.” --- Still
more confused, our heroine hesitated,
‘ Yes, Ma’am.’ Lady Clifford appear-
ing to be struck with her agitation, said,
“ You

“ You do not in the least resemble
“ Mrs. Overbury.” “ No, Ma’am,”
said Ophelia; then rising hastily, she
exclaimed, “ Bless me! how warm it is;
“ I am quite faint.” “ You had better
“ take a turn in the garden, my love,”
said Lady Clifford, still fixedly gazing
upon her. Glad of any relief, she
courtesied, and withdrew; and as she
shut the door, heard Lady Clifford
sigh, and exclaim, “ Good Heavens!
“ this is really particular.”

The fear that Lady Clifford suspected
the untruth of her answers, in reality
soon gave to Ophelia the sickness she
had at first pretended; but a shower of
tears a little relieving her, she returned
to the drawing-room, where she found
the family and the tea equipage.

Lady Clifford called her to the sofa
on which she sat herself, and kindly said,
“ I fear,

“ I fear, my dear love, I have distressed
“ you, by my impertinent questions;
“ so tender a heart should not be re-
“ minded of its sorrows : forgive me,
“ my dear girl, and think no longer on
“ melancholy subjects.” ‘ Ah, Ma-
‘ dam !’ said Ophelia, ‘ if you for-
‘ bid me this, you may as well tell me
‘ that I must cease to think at all ! as
‘ it is impossible for me to cease think-
‘ ing, and that with the most ponderous
‘ consideration, on a subject which so
‘ materially concerns me as this. At
‘ the same time, I must acknowledge
‘ myself full of ingratitude, when I
‘ but allow a moment’s thought on the
‘ many inestimable blessings I have had
‘ bestowed upon me in my present situ-
‘ ation ; particularly that valuable one
‘ of being under the parental tuition of
‘ Mr. and Mrs. Overbury.’

Here,

Here, by a question of Lady Eugenia's, the conversation became general; Ophelia by degrees recovered her spirits, and after supper returned to the parsonage.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XII.

AN ADVENTURE.

A FORTNIGHT imperceptibly glided away, during which, some part of every day was spent by Ophelia at Lumley-House; and intimacy, which so frequently lessens and so seldom adds to esteem, served but to shew, both to Lady Clifford and Ophelia, the extensive excellence of each other's character. Happy in the society of so charming and estimable a friend, Ophelia strove to banish every idea which led to melancholy, and every conjecture which gave birth to uneasiness. Convinced, that the first would impair her health, and assured that the latter could not at present be gratified, she tried (not wholly in vain)

vain) to compose and strengthen her mind; and, except at intervals, she had nearly regained her usual calm and tranquil vivacity; which, while it approached not in the smallest degree towards levity, was yet far removed from melancholy.

Ophelia was now so used to be every day at Lumley-House, that it was equally matter of surprise and regret, when any passed in which she and her noble friends did not meet. Great, therefore, was her surprise, when two days had elapsed, and she heard nothing of them; rising, therefore, early the third morning, she resolved to walk towards the park, (though yet she could not reconcile to herself the idea of going unasked) in hopes of meeting some of the family, as she had often done in her morning rambles.

About

About seven o'clock, therefore, she began her stroll, and soon reached the stile where once before she had met Lord Clifford. Here she hesitated whether or not to proceed; but the beauty of the morning tempted her on; and having passed the field, she entered the park, and going to the river, invited by the stillness of the morning, and the coolness of that delicious place, she sat down on its banks, under a clump of willows. The octagon temple here formed a striking point of view, and raised in her mind a long train of reflections on the instability of human happiness. She sighed, and drawing from her bosom the locket so often mentioned, she touched the secret spring, and contemplated, with uncontrolled distress, the portrait of her father! "Alas!" she cried, "it is probable that my birth gave to the original of this dear por-

“ trait, a joy, little inferior to that in
“ memory of which yonder building
“ was raised; and yet, what am I now!”

Again she sighed; and pressing the inanimate form to her lips, she closed the spring, and committing it to her bosom, arose; when turning her head, how great was her dismay, to behold a young man apparently observing her, with the most earnest attention! She started: but recollecting, none but a visitor at the park could be in that place, she instantly saw she had nothing to dread but his having heard her exclamations; which she judged, however, from the distance he stood, to be impossible; she therefore, though in some confusion, moved hastily towards home.

L'Inconnu, advancing with a graceful bow, said, “ Let me entreat, Madam, “ that I may not disturb you.” She courtesied

courtesied silently, and went on. He continued, " I fear, Madam, it is impossible you should forgive my impertinent intrusion ; and I know I can never pardon myself, unless you permit me to hope it has not interrupted you." ' Sir,' answered Ophelia, ' you have not in the least disturbed me ; ' I was going home.' She then courtesied with dignity, though blushing and confused, and passed hastily on ; and as he did not attempt to follow, though he stood fixedly gazing upon her, she was soon out of sight, and not long ere she reached home.

Her adventure engrossed the conversation of the breakfast table ; and it had not been long removed, before Lord Clifford's chariot stopped at the door, and Lady Eugenia tripped into the house. She found Ophelia and Mrs.

Overbury sitting together ; and told the latter that she was come to run away with Miss Melbourne for the whole day ; adding, “ I am sure you will not “ refuse me, my dear Madam, when “ you consider Miss Melbourne has not “ been with us these two days.” “ I “ do consider, Lady Eugenia, but—’ “ Nay, no *but*s, my dear Madam, you “ must consent ; besides, I want to in- “ troduce her to my brother.”—“ To “ your brother, Lady Eugenia !”— “ Yes, Ma’am. Dear ! I had forgot “ you did not know he was come ; he “ arrived the day before yesterday, “ which was the reason that we did not “ call here ; for you may imagine we “ have all been in a charming bustle !” “ I congratulate you,” said Ophelia, “ on “ this delightful event.” “ Delightful, “ indeed, my dear ; but come, make “ haste, *deprehez, deprehez, aller vite !*” “ Bless

“ Bless me !” said Ophelia, laughing,
 “ you are in mighty haste ! I cannot
 “ possibly go in my morning dress.”—
 “ Psha ! such nonsense ! I never saw
 “ you look better ; we shall have no
 “ company ; so humour me, by going
 “ just as you are.”

Ophelia looked at Mrs. Overbury,
 who said, “ Go, my dear, as you are,
 “ since Lady Eugenia desires it.”—
 Ophelia then, taking up her cloak, took
 leave of Mrs. Overbury, and stepped
 with Lady Eugenia into the carriage.

They were scarcely seated, ere Lady
 Eugenia exclaimed, “ I hope you are
 “ recovered from your fright, Miss
 “ Melbourne ?” “ What fright, Lady
 “ Eugenia ?”——“ Then, you do not
 “ know ?” “ Really, I do not.”——
 “ Well, I cannot tell whether you are
 H 3 “ alarmed

“alarmed or not, but I am; for little
“did I suspect you of such a wicked
“action!” “What action—what do
“you mean?” “Why, have you not,
“innocent as you pretend to look,
“stolen my Lord Belvour’s heart?”—
“Are you well awake, Lady Eugenia?
“do me the favour to recollect I have
“never seen him!” “Well, you know
“best whether you usually walk with
“your eyes shut; but I am sure he
“has seen you.” “Walk with my
“eyes shut!—you are certainly in some
“interesting dream! Pray, do wake,
“and explain yourself.” “That is
“easily done; pray, were you not in
“our park this morning?” “Yes.”
“Well, do you begin to perceive?”—
“Bless me! yes; was that Lord Bel-
“vour?” “Oh, by no means! I have
“been dreaming all the morning!”
“How can you be so teizing! Be cha-
“ritable,

' ritable, and tell me how you guessed
 ' it was I who met the Marquis ?' " I
 " did not guess; it was my mother
 " who found it out, by his description."
 ' Will you tell me how ?' " Yes, I
 " will tell you the whole story ; he be-
 " gan by asking me, if I was acquaint-
 " ed with any young lady who had
 " blue eyes, dark hair, and the finest
 " complexion in the world ?" " Oh
 ' fy, Lady Eugenia ! this is all your
 ' own invention.' " No, upon my
 " word ; so I told him, No ; I never
 " minded people's eyes ; and asked him
 " Why ?

" In answer to this, Lord Belvour
 " said, that walking in the park this
 " morning, he was surprized by the
 " sight of an elegant female figure,—
 " (be silent, or I shall not tell you one
 " word more)—sitting by the side of

“ the river; that she was dressed in a
“ white *leve-vite*, with a blue sash; a
“ straw hat, lined and tied with blue,
“ on her head, and her dark hair in
“ long ringlets to the bottom of her
“ waist; that the beauty of her form so
“ astonished him, that he began to be-
“ lieve the ancient stories of nymphs,
“ and — and — (let me recollect the
“ word) hamydryads; he therefore ad-
“ vanced slowly, expecting to see the
“ lovely phantom vanish every mo-
“ ment; but however, he began to be
“ convinced she was mortal, by a deep
“ sigh, and some inarticulate words;
“ and immediately he perceived she
“ was fixedly gazing on a locket; and
“ after a few minutes, she raised her
“ head, sighed, pressed the locket to
“ her lips, (don’t blush quite so much,
“ my dear!) returned it to her bosom,
“ rose, and, turning round, discovered
“ (to

“ (to use his own words) a face as perfect as her form.”

“ Oh, Lady Eugenia !” interrupted Ophelia, “ I must not suffer you to invent such incredible things !” “ Lord, my dear, it’s very odd you won’t believe me, when I am racking my brain to remember what he said ! He spoke to her ; I suppose you know what he said : so, he concluded, by asking me, if I could tell who it was ? I answered very gravely, A ghost, I suppose ; for I never once thought of you : but Lady Clifford said, it must be Miss Melbourne ! but I don’t perfectly comprehend about the locket ; for I think she is too sensible, and too good, to have formed a private attachment ; and a public one I never heard of. Sure, my Lord, you must have been mis-

“ taken ! but he said, No ; and asked
“ a description of you ; I told him you
“ was taller than I am, not quite so
“ tall as Lady Clifford, and had dark
“ hair, which was all I knew about
“ you.

“ My mother laughed at my inatten-
“ tion, as she always does, and describ-
“ ed to him every one of your features.
“ He said he was certain you was the
“ person he met : and I set off to fetch
“ you to dinner. So now, thank me
“ for remembering all this ; you know
“ it is not my *forte*.” “ I do thank
“ your Ladyship, more for what you
“ have remembered than for what you
“ have invented ; which I suspect to be
“ the largest part of this story.” “ Upon
“ my word, you are deceived ; I have
“ not told you half of what I heard.---
“ But about this locket ! what would I
“ not

“ not give to see it !” ‘ Assure your-
 ‘ self, that if the sight could afford you
 ‘ any pleasure, you should ; but as that
 ‘ would not be the case, I must beg
 ‘ your excuse.’ “ Well, happy’s the
 “ man !”—‘ No, indeed, you are mis-
 ‘ taken ; it is all an error you do not
 ‘ comprehend—’ “ Nay, pray do not
 “ distress yourself !” answered Eugenia,
 with an incredulous smile ; and the chaise
 stopped before Ophelia could reply.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EMBARRASSMENT.

VEXATION and confusion were so legibly written on the expressive countenance of Ophelia, that the moment she entered the drawing-room, Lady Clifford perceived something had disturbed her. She was alone, and exclaimed, "Eugenia, what have you been doing to Miss Melbourne? I am sure you have displeased her."——
'No, indeed,' said Ophelia, 'your Ladyship is mistaken; I am hurt that Lady Eugenia suspects my sincerity in a point in which I cannot satisfy her, except by asseverations which she will not believe.' "Nay," said Lady Eugenia,

Eugenia, “ indeed I did not mean to be
“ impertinent, neither could I have ap-
“ prehended that a little raillery would
“ have displeased you ;—but you are so
“ very grave !”——‘ I am grave, my
‘ dear Lady Eugenia, and perhaps I am
‘ petulant ; but believe me, I am not so
‘ unjust as to be offended !”

Lady Eugenia took her hand, and
said, “ We are friends then, my dear
“ Miss Melbourne.” ‘ Surely,’ an-
swered Ophelia ; ‘ I hope we have never
‘ been otherwise.’ As she said this, the
door opened, and a genteel, though
not handsome young man, came in.
“ ’Tis my brother !” said Lady Euge-
nia ; and running to meet him, led him
towards Ophelia, saying, “ Give me
“ leave to have the pleasure of intro-
“ ducing my brother to you. This is
“ Lord

“ Lord Osmond. Brother, this is my
“ friend Miss Melbourne.”

“ The usual compliments passing, Lady Clifford rose, and approaching the little groupe, said, “ My dear Osmond, in
“ this young lady you see my third
“ child; you know not how greatly I
“ am indebted to her for many hours
“ of rational and salutary happiness.”—

“ Miss Melbourne, Madam,” answered Lord Osmond, with an agreeable vivacity, “ wants not the distinction you give
“ her; her own attractions are powerful
“ enough to gain my admiration at first
“ sight; but when you introduce her as
“ your daughter, I am more than half
“ tempted to claim her as my sister.—
“ But come, Madam, you have engaged
“ my sincere esteem to Miss Melbourne,
“ by calling her your friend; have you
“ no distinction for me?” “ Certainly,”
answered

answered Lady Clifford; "have I not
" told her you are my son? I hope
" that will entitle you to a small share
" of her regard; for I know of no me-
" rit you have of your own!" "Thank
" you," said he, smiling; then taking
Ophelia's hand, he added, "Do not
" believe Lady Clifford, Miss Mel-
" bourne; but allow me to prove I
" have some judgment, by my admira-
" tion of you!"

She courtesied, though a becoming
retenue prevented a reply; and Lady
Clifford made some rallying answer; af-
ter which the conversation became ge-
neral. In a short time, Lord Osmond
said, "I wonder what's become of Bel-
" your! most probably, though, he is
" walking in the park." "Aye," said
Lady Clifford, "who would not, that
" is favoured by such charming visions!"
looking

looking at Ophelia, who blushed very much. Lord Osmond answered, "Yes, I imagine he is seeking his lovely wood-nymphs: I'll try and find him." "Do so," said Eugenia, laughing; "but take care you do not fall into the river, in contemplation on Lady Sophia." "Do not be afraid," answered he; and left the room.

After he was gone, Lady Eugenia went up to dress, and Ophelia dreading to meet Lord Belvour, begged permission to go with her; which was readily granted.

They returned not to the drawing-room till very near dinner-time; and Ophelia's colour was considerably heightened, by perceiving that Lord Belvour was of the party: his eyes met hers, which were immediately cast down;

down; and she moved round to the place where Lady Clifford sat, who, observing her confusion, and pitying it, entered into a trifling conversation with her; which Ophelia eagerly improved. Her embarrassment was considerably increased, when she perceived the Marquis approaching them. He whispered something to Lady Clifford, who answered, "Certainly, my Lord;" and then gravely turning to Ophelia, she said, "Miss Melbourne, this is the Marquis of Belvoir. My Lord, Miss Melbourne." Each bowed, but neither spoke.

He continued, however, to stand by them, and seemed to wish to engage Ophelia in conversation, but made no actual effort; and the entrance of dinner relieved her from a painful situation.

Immediately

Immediately after dinner, Lady Clifford, addressing herself to Lady Eugenia and Ophelia, said, "As you two ladies are very good friends again, I may venture to ask the cause of your disagreement this morning?" "Let me beg," said Ophelia, "your Ladyship will not call it a disagreement; I must have been strangely peevish, to disagree with Lady Eugenia about such a trifle!" "Well, my love, if it was such a trifle, I may perhaps learn what it was?"

Ophelia blushed, and looked at Eugenia with supplications in her eyes. "You look, Eugenia," said Lord Ofmond, "so very mischievous, that I begin to hope we shall hear the cause of Miss Melbourne's confusion; I am convinced it is very interesting."

"You

‘ You are very impertinent !’ said Eugenia, ‘ and I have a good mind not to tell you a word about it.’ “ A “ *good mind, indeed !*” said Ophelia ; “ and I entreat that your Ladyship’s “ goodness may continue.” “ Why, “ Lord ! my dear,” replied Eugenia, “ you know it was not true ; so I may “ as well tell.” “ You are extremely “ unkind,” said Ophelia, “ because “ you know I cannot possibly *prove* “ your accusation untrue !” “ Nei- “ ther of my accusations,” replied Lady Eugenia : “ the one,” looking at Lord Belvour, “ grows every moment more “ conspicuous ; and the other, you can- “ not but be very conscious of !”

Lord Osmond now interrupting them, said, “ You have the secret between “ you, ladies ! but I do not despair of “ partaking in it.”

‘ Come,

‘Come, come!’ said Lady Clifford, ‘I was not aware that my question would have done mischief, or I would not have asked it; but I cannot mistake the expression of Miss Melbourne’s eyes, which bids me desire Eugenia to be silent.’ “Your Ladyship,” said Ophelia, “is always considerate; but I know not when I shall forgive Lady Eugenia.” “Nay,” replied Eugenia, “I think I have been very good!” “You have,” said Ophelia, with a smile, “but who must I thank?”

‘You must thank me, Miss Melbourne,’ said Lord Osmond; ‘for nothing but my impertinence, as my sister calls it, prevented her proceeding.’ “I do thank your Lordship,” answered Ophelia; “for I am very happy Lady Eugenia did not proceed.”

“ need.” “ And your thanks,” he replied, “ are a compensation for the disappointment.”

The ladies then offered to retire ; but the motion was over-ruled ; and the evening was passed in social and agreeable conversation.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARACTERS.

ON Miss Melbourne's return to the parsonage, she acquainted Mr. and Mrs. Overbury with a full account of her morning's adventure: and they sat chatting it over, till near twelve o'clock, and then retired. Ophelia, instead of going to bed, as she was not sleepy, sat down, and wrote the following letter to Mrs. Alwin, in answer to one she had received a few days before.

' You chide me, my dearest Mrs.
' Alwin, for not giving you the por-
' traits of my friends at Lumley-House.
" I am unwell," you say; " I want
" amusement, and from your descrip-
" tive

“tive talents I expect it.” That you
 ‘are indisposed, my inestimable friend,
 ‘I extremely lament; that you want
 ‘amusement, I am sorry; for I fear it
 ‘is not in my power to give it you: all
 ‘I can do, however, you may com-
 ‘mand; and without farther exordium,
 ‘I proceed.

“First of the first!” my beloved
 ‘Lady Clifford stands earliest on the list
 ‘with me. She is about forty, tall and
 ‘commanding in her air. At first sight
 ‘you are struck with a kind of awe,
 ‘which the sweetness of her counte-
 ‘nance immediately dissipates, and
 ‘leaves only a sensation of the tenderest
 ‘esteem. Her understanding is solid,
 ‘and cultivated; and yet I have not
 ‘given you my idea of it: it possesses
 ‘that brightness, discrimination, and
 ‘discernment which you know I am so
 ‘fond

“fond of. Her temper I apprehend to
“be rather hasty; for, take from her a
“small share of family pride (which yet
“narrows not her heart) and you do
“not leave her a single fault. Extensive
“benevolence, and the warmest charity,
“complete her admirable character;
“which I know not how to praise as I
“ought. She can tolerate folly which
“nature gives, but none that art teaches;
“affectation, vanity, insensibility, and
“illiberality, provoke at once her anger
“and her satire. She once said, “I do
“not object to a man’s making a fool
“of himself, if he pleases; but why
“should he obtrude his folly on me?”
“But,” answered my Lord, “if every
“one held your opinion, what would
“become of society?” Society!” she
“replied, “ah, my dear Lord, do not
“so degrade the term, I beseech you!
“Visitors, perhaps, would be scarce;
“but,

“ but, were my sentiments to become
“ general, the loss would not be much
“ regretted !” Her vein of satire, with
“ her judgment, is delightful, and so
“ natural, that she cannot restrain it ;—
“ but you will ask, “ Do you not call
“ these faults ?” Ah no, my dear mo-
“ derate friend, to me they are beauties !
“ If I dwell so long on each of my cha-
“ racters, this letter will be longer than
“ you will be inclined to read.

“ From what I have already said of
“ the Earl, you will perceive he is a
“ man of the world ; that is to say, what
“ is usually styled a polite and accom-
“ plished man : his manners are those
“ of a person of quality ; and you do
“ not, till you have known him some
“ time, perceive that he is rather super-
“ ficial. He has a shining readiness
“ about him, that imposes on many,

‘ but he is, in reality, neither very deep
‘ nor very brilliant.

‘ Shall I next describe the son or the
‘ daughter? — Priority of acquaintance
‘ gives the ~~pas~~ to Lady Eugenia Of-
‘ mond. She is, I suppose you know,
‘ half a year older than I am, but not
‘ near so tall; her person is indeed very
‘ insignificant, and her light hair, and
‘ small grey eyes, do not add to its dig-
‘ nity. Her face is plain, and totally
‘ inexpressive.

‘ I am afraid, dear Madam, if I pro-
‘ ceed to describe Lady Eugenia’s cha-
‘ racter impartially, you will think I
‘ dislike her; but in truth, in spite of
‘ all her weaknesses, I have a regard
‘ for her. Her understanding is not
‘ deep, neither does she want sense;
‘ but

“ but she has no variety of ideas, no
“ distinctions in them, no penetration;
“ in consequence of which, she is per-
“ petually in a puzzle; and this, I
“ fancy, partly proceeds from a total
“ inattention to every thing, and every
“ body. It was but this morning she
“ declared she did not know a feature
“ in my face; though, that she can re-
“ member, she proved at the same
“ time, by repeating a long conversa-
“ tion to me: added to this, she has a
“ kind of indolent instability, which
“ prevents her applying long together
“ to any one thing.

“ You, my dear friend, who, from
“ your earliest infancy, - have been
“ taught all those little niceties of be-
“ haviour, which give a farther grace
“ to the most amiable character, would

‘ be much disconcerted, were you to
‘ witness the abruptness and inaccuracy
‘ of Lady Eugenia’s manners ! She of-
‘ fends without intention, and disgusts
‘ without meaning to do so. She is at
‘ times grave, even to dulness, and
‘ at others, lively, even to childish-
‘ ness.

‘ Eugenia’s temper, however, is na-
‘ turally sweet, and she tries, although
‘ she does not always succeed, to
‘ oblige. She is extremely modest and
‘ humble ; too humble indeed ! for
‘ she has not even emulation.

‘ Although I have said so much of
‘ Lady Eugenia’s character, I am sen-
‘ sible it is one that a little time may
‘ much alter (although I very much
‘ fear cannot amend) ; for, to say the
‘ truth,

‘ truth, she has no stability on any
‘ point.

‘ This morning, I was introduced to
‘ Lord Osmond, Eugenia’s brother : he
‘ is tall, and well made, but not hand-
‘ some. So short an acquaintance cannot
‘ have given me a determinate idea of
‘ his character ; he is, however, the fa-
‘ vourite of his mother. A great recom-
‘ mendation, in my opinion, he is polite
‘ and spirited ; and in that, I have said
‘ all I know.

‘ The Marquis Belvour !—“ Who is
“ he ?” you ask :—The very particular
‘ friend of Lord Osmond, and the only
‘ son of the Duke of Westbury ; him I
‘ saw also yesterday, for the first time.
‘ To say he is handsome, is praise too
‘ cold ; and yet, beautiful is a silly
‘ phrase for a man. He is tall, and most
‘ elegantly

‘ elegantly formed; every motion is
‘ graceful; his hair is dark chestnut, his
‘ forehead rather high, but white; his
‘ complexion a clear brown; his eye-
‘ brows, teeth, and indeed every fea-
‘ ture, charming; his eyes, which are
‘ more expressive than any I ever saw,
‘ are dark, and explain every thing at
‘ a single glance. Though his face is thus
‘ perfect, I think its highest charm is
‘ that animation, intelligence, and be-
‘ nevolence which shine in it. Of his
‘ mind (except from his features) I am
‘ a very incompetent judge; but from
‘ these, and the few words he did speak,
‘ I should think him the most amiable
‘ man in the world.

‘ His sister, Lady Sophia Raymond,
‘ and another young lady, are expected
‘ very soon.—Eugenia says, the former
‘ is very reserved, and, she thinks, not
‘ agreeable;

' agreeable ; but the other is lively, and
 ' pleasing. I do not depend much on
 ' her judgment ; but when they come,
 ' you shall hear what I think of them.
 ' In the mean time, I am,

' Most sincerely,

' Your very affectionate

OPHELIA.

' Parsonage,

' May the 20th.'

CHAPTER XV.

A DISSERTATION.

AFTER our fair heroine had finished this long epistle, she retired to bed; but, as Voltaire says, *Ses rideaux etait fermes mais elle n'avait nulle envie de dormir seu cœur, et seu imagination, etait trop evielles.* She recollected every word that had passed in the course of the day; and, with sorrow, she saw that it was impossible for her to clear herself to Lady Clifford of the imputation of a secret attachment, except by disclosing the truth, in which she felt an invincible repugnance to do. 'And what,' thought she, 'must Lord Bel-
' your

‘ your think of me ?’ The idea of this was more tormenting than any which had preceded it ; ‘ and yet,’ she continued, ‘ it is but a little matter of importance what he thinks ; only one would not wish to give a stranger, and particularly one so apparently amiable, the least unfavourable idea of one : yet, how shall I avoid it ?’ She knew very well that Lady Eugenia would never cease her raillery, nor had she discovered that it had the smallest effect upon her.

Ophelia now began to exclaim in the following manner : “ Fool that I am, “ why is it that my every sentiment is “ as plain to every indifferent observer as to myself ? How will Lady “ Clifford’s opinion of me sink, if she “ gives but the least degree of belief “ that I have ceased to be too good

“and too sensible to form a private
“attachment? Well, methinks I will
“endeavour all I can not to retain the
“smallest recollection of it any longer.
“Now, let me see: I have to con-
“sider in what dress I am to appear in
“for to-morrow.”

The debate which occupied the mind
of Miss Melbourne on the subject of
her apparel, at least took her up half an
hour to discuss; when, starting up on a
sudden, she exclaimed, “Heavens!
“is it possible that I have taken such a
“length of time in considering on so
“unprofitable a subject! When did
“I ever such a thing before? But ra-
“ther, Why is it that I have done it
“now?”—Amidst the various con-
jectures which was raised by this thought,
sleep proved powerful, and overtook
her; and the next morning she arose
much

much later than her usual hour of getting up; but her spirits were greatly renovated.

When Miss Melbourne began to dress herself for the day, she found that fixing upon what she was to wear, still more engaged her than ever she had been before; and it was not, till Mrs. Overbury entering the room, and expressing her astonishment at the slowness of her motions, that Ophelia could determine. She then, however, fixed on dressing herself in a fine coloured muslin, lined with pale lilac, and decorated with the same coloured ribbons, in a becoming taste; with which also her white chip-hat was lined, and tied under her chin. On surveying herself in the glass, she could not but acknowledge she had never looked so well in her life. As it was a beautiful day, Ophelia

chose to walk to Lumley-House with the footman, where she was received with reproaches, for being so late.

Miss Melbourne now imagined that she perceived a singular gravity in the behaviour of Lady Clifford, that she knew not how to account for, and which all her Ladyship's kindness and indulgence had not the power of concealing.—There was not any thing occurred which demands remarking. In this sweet and estimable society many days passed over ; but never one in which Ophelia did not visit her friends, or be visited by them. She became every day more acquainted with the merits of each : and this happy little party, being familiarized to each other by a thousand nameless trifles, seemed as if they were actuated by one and the same

same soul ; and exerted themselves to improve the hours.

The mind of Lady Eugenia, indeed, was too weak to mix congenially with theirs : it was not strong enough to resist ; and, by yielding to all their plans, she appeared to take part in them. They read, worked, walked, sung, painted, and conversed by turns ; and the voice of Ophelia received additional strength and accuracy from the accompaniment of Lord Belvour's flute, which " discoursed most eloquent music : " and the violin of Lord Omond, with the harpsichord of Miss Melbourne, and the violincello of Lord Clifford, formed at times a most delightful concert ; and at others, the soft lute of Ophelia was her only assistance. Although a want of knowledge in Lady Eugenia excluded her from partaking
in

In these, yet she seemed to take pleasure in their harmony; and by that means prevented the want of talents in herself from being so much taken notice of. While they were occupied in designing and executing figures, or views from the windows (of which Ophelia collected several, both of her own drawing and her friends) Lady Eugenia would copy flowers or landscapes:— and they were all happy.

The library was continually the scene of their employment. Their conversations often fell on literary subjects: and one day, on the Fine Arts, Music, and Poetry, they debated for some time on which was the superior. At length Ophelia, who had hitherto said very little on the subject, took occasion to say, “It is, I think, very observable
“how closely and intimately these
“three

“ three elegant accomplishments are
“ united, and how difficult it is to se-
“ parate them. Thus: Painting and
“ Poetry receive each the highest assist-
“ ance from the other. The pictures
“ of imagination, which the one helps
“ us to form, the other realizes in co-
“ lours; if not more vivid, more de-
“ termined and lasting. On the other
“ hand, Drawing derives its most ex-
“ cellent and most beautiful subjects
“ from the images of Poetry. Music
“ adds to and receives graces from
“ Poetry; but with Drawing, I think,
“ one may pronounce it wholly un-
“ connected.”

Lady Clifford replied to Miss Mel-
bourne, ‘ It is so, my dear girl; and
‘ your remarks, to give them the
‘ highest praise, are worthy of you.
‘ The art of Drawing, however, if it is
‘ uncon-

‘ unconnected with Music, has one
‘ very great advantage over it, that it
‘ can be enjoyed alone ; which Music,
‘ except on the harpsichord or organ
‘ (and then, it cannot be said to be
‘ in its full extent, by any means)
‘ cannot. All others are, in my opi-
‘ nion, only accompanying instru-
‘ ments, and therefore, when alone,
‘ are very inferior.’ Here Lady Clif-
ford finished her remark ; and at the
same time gave a look at Miss Mel-
bourne, as if she wished to hear her
say something in reply.

Ophelia immediately conceived the
idea Lady Clifford had in giving her so
significant a look at the close of her
observation ; but had that not been the
case, she was fully prepared and deter-
mined to answer her Ladyship to one
particular, in which she a little differed.

Ophelia

Ophelia therefore began, as follows :

“ Admitting this to be so (and which I
“ do not by any means deny) yet,
“ give me leave to observe, that it is
“ still only but a partial inconvenience,
“ and that Drawing has one much
“ greater, in my opinion ; which is
“ this, — At the time of performance,
“ the pleasure which is derived from
“ it is wholly uncommunicable, and
“ very unfociable. Again, you will
“ say, to compensate this, that Draw-
“ ing can always give pleasure after
“ that of the artist has ceased ; which
“ must be admitted. It is therefore,
“ as far as I am capable of judging,
“ very unfair to divide these delightful
“ arts, or anywise imagine the one
“ to be superior to the other : they
“ ought always to be united and inse-
“ parable.”

The

The Marquis of Belvoir, who had paid the strictest attention to what Ophelia had just spoken, after making her a respectful bow, thus addressed her: "You, Miss Melbourne, who unite them so completely in your own person, may be justly allowed to say this; and we who see, in you, how they may be joined, will most undoubtedly concur in your opinion; but permit me to add, since no one dissents from your idea, that a person who despises and depreciates the one, cannot, in my opinion, have a competent knowledge of the other; and, however well his understanding may comprehend the mechanical parts, he cannot, nay, it is absolutely impossible for him to be liberal-minded enough to have the least relish for the other: And this brings us home to our old agreement, That those who
perfectly

“ perfectly have a comprehension, and
 “ delight themselves in the study of
 “ the Fine Arts, must be amiable cha-
 “ racters.—”

The Marquis took occasion to make
 a long pause here; and Lady Clifford,
 imagining he had come to a conclusion,
 began the very moment in which he
 resumed his observations, to make him
 a complimentary reply; but perceiv-
 ing her precipitancy, apologized, and
 the Marquis went on with his remarks,
 as follows:

“ Although I do not pretend to say
 “ that I have not been acquainted with
 “ amiable people who have not had
 “ any love for them; yet this I will
 “ firmly venture to maintain, That I
 “ never knew an unamiable person who
 “ did. I am far from the opinion of
 “ supposing

‘ supposing that a love for them has
‘ the least tendency to make a person
‘ anywise liberal and charming; but
‘ that liberality of mind produces the
‘ love I speak of, which few feel, and
‘ as few understand. But even to this
‘ rule, I acknowledge there may be
‘ some exceptions, although I do not
‘ know a single instance, in the circle
‘ of my acquaintance, nor do I re-
‘ collect of ever hearing such a one
‘ mentioned.’

Lady Clifford, who had heard the Marquis’s sentiments with a deal of satisfaction; and being highly pleased with his free and affable manner of delivering them, answered, “ Your Lordship has spoken so well, and so fully
“ on this subject, that, as nothing farther can be said on it, and we are
“ agreed, *nem. con.* I move for the adjournment
“

“jourment of this committee to a
“future period.”

Her Ladyship expressed this in so humorous a manner, that it was the means of creating a deal of laughter, and which took a considerable time to subside. After this, the ladies withdrew for some time, in order to dress themselves; but were not long before they returned: Lady Clifford and Miss Melbourne first entered; her Ladyship having hold of Ophelia's hand, and seemingly in close conversation; and then followed Lady Eugenia. After they had been seated, the Marquis, who sat next to Miss Melbourne, speaking to her in a low tone of voice, said,
“I am not positively sure, Miss Mel-
“bourne, whether I was altogether
“right in my assertion,” looking at her, with a smile. To which she replied,

plied, 'Your assertion of what? my
' Lord.' "That you," answered he,
"unite the three charming arts in
"your own person. That of Music
"and Painting, we know to a cer-
"tainty: but whether Poetry? At
"any rate," continued his Lordship,
"I am very sure it is your own fault
"if you do not write extremely well:
"and besides, you who are so luxu-
"riant a subject, I think, may, with the
"greatest propriety, be said to pos-
"sess it."

It was some time before Ophelia
made any reply to the Marquis. She
blushed for a while, and answered him,
with a smile, 'I presume, your Lord-
' ship means in the satiric stile of com-
' position?' To which he replied,
"No, Miss Melbourne, you do not
"surely think so! you cannot suppose
"that

“that to be my meaning: you must
 “know the contrary. But,” continued his Lordship, “do you really
 “never employ some part of your
 “time to write in verse?” As the Marquis seemed to press this question, Ophelia was too honest to dissemble; and acknowledged, with reluctance, that she sometimes spent an hour or two in that exercise, by way of amusing herself.

Miss Melbourne having mentioned several subjects on which she had written, in the poetic stile, his Lordship intreated her, in a very polite manner, to indulge him with a sight of some of her performance. With much difficulty, he at length prevailed on her to shew him some pieces, which he read, and highly extolled the abilities of Ophelia, while his commendations made
 a strong

a strong impresson on her heart. —
There is no praise worth receiving but
from those we esteem : and how could
she avoid esteeming a man so amiable
as the Marquis ?

CHAPTER XVI

A DEPRIVATION.

WHEN Ophelia returned home in the evening, she found her dear and parental friends, Mr. and Mrs. Overbury, sitting together, and engaged in a serious conversation. A little while after she had been seated, Mrs Overbury said to her, "My dear Ophelia, whether will you stay at home with Mr. Overbury, or go with me, the day after to-morrow, into Devonshire? This, I am persuaded, you did not think would happen so early, child." "Into Devonshire, Ma'am! you astonish me! And are you really going there so soon?"

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“soon?” “Yes, my love,” replied Mrs. Overbury, “I am. You know, “I have been waiting for a letter from “Henrietta, for some time, which was “to determine my going; and I received one this morning, about half “an hour after you went out; in “which she mentions her most sincere “wishes for the supporting presence of “her affectionate mother, as soon as “there is a possibility. I purpose, “therefore, setting off the day after “to-morrow.”

Ophelia hesitated, for some time, what answer she should give to Mrs. Overbury's question; then said, “Pray, “Ma'am, why cannot we all go? I “should think it the most agreeable “plan;” and stedfastly looked at Mr. Overbury at the same time. He made her no other reply than by lifting up his

his foot, which was violently fwelled with the gout : at sight of which Ophelia exclaimed, ‘ Oh Heavens ! what an ‘ unfortunate affair this is ! Oh my ‘ dear Sir, how grievously you are tor- ‘ mented ! I see the necessity you will ‘ have for a nurse during Mrs. Over- ‘ bury’s absence : I will with pleasure ‘ officiate in that capacity.’ Then turning to Mrs. Overbury, said, ‘ With ‘ your permission, Ma’am, I will stay ‘ at home, and be housekeeper till you ‘ return.’

This kind offer of Ophelia’s was highly pleasing to Mr. and Mrs. Overbury, as well as acceptable, on such an occasion : and Mrs. Overbury replied to her, “ You are very good, my love, “ indeed ; and I think it will be much “ better : it would be unkind to leave “ Mr. Overbury by himself. But you

“ must promise me not to confine
“ yourself too much, Ophelia.” —
“ No, no,” replied Mr. Overbury, I
“ will not consent to your remaining
“ at home with me, if you do not pro-
“ mise to do just as you would if Mrs.
“ Overbury was here : without that
“ agreement, my dear Ophelia, I would
“ much rather have you go along with
“ her ; and I shall manage here in the
“ best manner I can till your return.” —
Ophelia then answered him, “ Well,
“ we shall not make the least dispute
“ on the subject ; it shall be entirely
“ as you have both said.”

This matter being now determined,
and to the satisfaction of each, Miss
Melbourne was impatient to hear of
Henrietta ; and said to Mrs. Overbury,
“ But tell me, Madam, how my be-
“ loved Mrs. Alwin does ? it is now
“ some

“some time since I had the pleasure of
“hearing from her.” ‘Indeed,’ re-
plied Mrs. Overbury, ‘she is at this
‘time but in a very indifferent state,
‘Ophelia, and exceedingly low-spi-
‘rited; which makes me hasten my
‘visit the more.’ Mr. Overbury said,
it was his hope that she might have a
safe and expeditious journey, as his
dear Henrietta was all impatience for
the company of her affectionate mo-
ther; and he was certain that her pre-
sence would contribute to a speedy re-
covery.

Every thing now was settled re-
lative to the journey; and it was deter-
mined that Ophelia should remain at
home with Mr. Overbury. This met
as much with Miss Melbourne’s appro-
bation as theirs, and rather more so,
as she had intended going into Devon-

shire to see her friend Mrs. Alwin, after her lying-in : and after which, as Mrs. Overbury observed, should her Henrietta do well, every thing would then afford more pleasure to Ophelia, than if she was to go there at an earlier period. Mr. Overbury begged that no time might be omitted to write him an account of his daughter's safe recovery, as soon as that time arrived : and Ophelia joined in the happiness she should feel on hearing an account of Mrs. Alwin's safe and speedy delivery.

The conversation was agreeably kept on for a considerable while on this subject. At last they found the time approach in which it was necessary to retire to rest ; and Ophelia, bidding them adieu for the night, retired to her bed-chamber.

When

When Ophelia got up the next morning, which was earlier than her accustomed hour, she took a long walk in the garden, and amused herself by reading one of her favourite authors, till the time of Mr. and Mrs. Overbury's coming down to breakfast had arrived. She then mentioned to Mrs. Overbury her desire of spending the whole of that day at home with her, as perhaps she should not have the pleasure of enjoying her company for some time again; and she would not choose to leave her beloved protectress on such an occasion. Mrs. Overbury kindly thanked Ophelia for the great affection she shewed to her on all occasions, and particularly the present; and most thankfully accepted of the offer she made her; but at the same time expressed her hope, that it might not be the means of preventing

Miss Melbourne from any previous engagement she might have made, and where her company, she was sure, would be equally agreeable. Ophelia made a low courtesy, and said, 'I am
' happy in having the good opinion of
' so sincere a friend ; and likewise added, ' It so happens, that I have not at
' present any other appointment ; but
' had that even been the case, I know
' not of one that should not have given
' place to the pleasure I shall receive in
' your company.'

When the morning arrived in which Mrs. Overbury was to take her leave, although but for a short time, Ophelia was quite overwhelmed with grief at the thought of her departure. She sighed and wept. Her feelings for her dear and earliest friend, on this occasion, were equally as poignant as if they
had

had not been to see each other more. She then exclaimed, “ Ah my beloved
“ mother ! it is now that we part for
“ the first time ! Ah, how shall I be
“ able to support this deprivation. Oh,
“ methinks, I at this moment feel as if
“ my heart was torn from my bosom !
“ How shall I support this ?”

Mrs. Overbury, at seeing Ophelia so deeply affected, could not avoid shedding tears likewise, although she endeavoured to restrain them. Then taking Ophelia by the hand, she said,
“ Do not weep, my dear child, my second daughter ! dry up your tears,
“ and cease lamenting ; for we soon
“ shall enjoy the happiness of meeting
“ again. I shall write to you on every
“ occasion, you may be assured. In
“ the mean time rely on Mr. Overbury’s advice ; and any dubious
“ point

“ point that may occur, consult him;
“ he will be ever ready to assist you
“ with his opinion. I beg also, that
“ you will be particularly attentive to
“ your health.”—Here Mrs. Overbury
and Ophelia took leave of each other,
with an affectionate embrace and a deep
sigh.

This melancholy adieu so enervated
the mind of Miss Melbourne, that
many hours were spent by her in tears,
although she endeavoured all she could
to reason herself into good spirits; but
it was not in her power to contrive the
least amusement for herself, or find out
any comfort for her remaining vene-
rable and much afflicted friend Mr.
Overbury, who now stood in need of
such a companion as could help to che-
rish him.

Ophelia

Ophelia, who was by this time quite ashamed of her behaviour, as well as sorry for leaving her worthy friend Mr. Overbury so long by himself, at last procured resolution enough to enter his study, whither he had retired, and offered to read to him. This the good man most readily accepted; observing to her at the same time, that her emphatical and easy manner of expression, gave him a deal of satisfaction. Miss Melbourne courtesied; and then sat down by him. She began with some new Chemical Essays, which Mr. Overbury had been engaged in perusing before she went in. The study of Chemistry was a science in which he took peculiar delight, and bestowed a considerable part of his time in obtaining a thorough knowledge of it. Although this was not a subject which stood so high in the estimation of Ophelia,

lia,

lia, yet she made not the least objection to it. The soft and beautiful inflections of her voice, although on so very monotonous a subject, charmed the old man, and made him, for a while, forget his pain.

When they sat down together to tea, Mr. Overbury said, "My dear Ophelia, you have considerably enlivened me by your reading; but I will not any longer fatigue you with these essays. As the evening is warm, and the sky serene, we will, if agreeable to you, dear child, take a walk into the garden, to one of my favourite seats, and there amuse ourselves with a volume of Shakspeare, which we shall carry along with us." Miss Melbourne to this gave her most hearty concurrence; and they walked there

there slowly ; he supporting himself on her arm and his stick.

As soon as they had arrived in the garden, and seated, Ophelia began to read the play of ‘ Much Ado about Nothing.’ This excellent comedy afforded a fund of entertainment : they laughed and wept for some time alternately. They were seated on a bench, with its back to the house, under the shade of some trees, and commanding a beautiful and picturesque view ; nor could there be conceived any thing more strikingly pleasing than the figures of Mr. Overbury and Ophelia ! — an old man, whose venerable features bore the traces of goodness and peace, even more expressive than they did that of age ; whose white locks fell over his shoulders, and whose eyes were fixed,
with

with a mixture of tenderness and attention, on a young and lovely girl, who, leaning one arm on the side of the bench, and her face on her hand, was earnestly employed in reading aloud: and a slight wind having taken off her hat, her attention was so much engaged to the subject which she read, that she sat without it, while her beautiful long hair was flowing in ringlets down her back. This was a subject which would have done honour to the pencil of the greatest artist.—From the attitude in which Ophelia sat in, her hair falling over her face and hand, half shading the book she held, and gently waving in the breeze, her lovely form, in my opinion, completely answered that exquisite description which the Poet gives; and which I shall here insert:

“The

“The faultless form,
Shaped by the hand of Harmony; the
cheek
Where the live crimson thro’ the native
white,
Soft shooting o’er the face, diffuses bloom,
And ev’ry nameless grace: the parting lip,
Like the red rose-bud, moist with morning
dew,
Breathing delight:
The look resistless, piercing to the soul,
And by the soul inform’d.”

After Miss Melbourne had proceeded through several scenes of the comedy, and pausing a little at that speech of Leonatus,

“Give me a father who so lov’d his child,”

which touched her feelings so forcibly, she could not prevent the tears from flowing down her cheeks. Here she stopped for some moments; when, on a sudden

sudden, hearing a rustling amongst the leaves, she turned hastily round; and, starting from her seat, dropped the book, and exclaimed, “ Ah, Heavens! “ is it You!”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



